Lakota

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Understanding the Role of Professional Networks in K-12 Instructional Coaches' Growth and Development

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AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Problem of Practice

Instructional coaching is one of the most impactful forms of professional development that results in improved teacher instruction and student achievement in a K-12 setting (Kraft et al., 2018), yet little consensus exists on how to best support coaches. Lakota Local Schools has a team of 17 instructional coaches, known as Team Inspire, who support educators across the entire district by providing many forms of professional development.

> "...when you're an instructional coach, there's so much baptism by fire."
>
> –Focus Group Participant

Due to COVID-19, Team Inspire was not afforded as many opportunities to formally gather as an entire team to focus on their own professional development related to coaching teachers, leaving coaches feeling isolated and struggling to keep up with supporting teachers through the pandemic. Experienced educators, such as instructional coaches, benefit from an opportunity to network with others in a similar role (Frank et al., 2011; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2020). While this team has traditionally focused on providing high quality professional development (HQPD) to the educators they serve, less is known about what constitutes as HQPD specifically for coaches and the impact those learning experiences have on their individual growth and development as an instructional coach.

About Lakota Local Schools

Lakota Local Schools is the 10th largest school district in Ohio, located just outside of Cincinnati. The 2,000 teachers and staff across the district serve nearly 16,000 students in 20 buildings. Lakota has a team of 17 instructional coaches (called Innovation Specialists) that make up their Team Inspire. These 17 coaches are responsible for supporting all teachers with their instruction, and they provide both content and technology integration support. Being such a large district, Lakota traditionally has not sent their coaching team to network outside of the district.

Faced with feelings of isolation and the need to better understand how to support their coaches, Lakota formed a network of coaches across the state of Ohio called the Ohio Coach Network (OCN). A total of 28 coaches across eight districts joined the OCN; nine of them were Lakota coaches, including the OCN facilitator. Lakota was interested in learning more about the benefits of the OCN for coaches.

Research Questions

- **RQ1**: To what extent does a professional network of instructional coaches provide HQPD opportunities to those within the network? How does this compare to professional development provided in the past?

- **RQ2**: Do instructional coaches report learning gains and increased confidence in their coaching abilities as a result of engaging in a network of coaches?

- **RQ3**: What additional support is needed for the growth and development of participants beyond the network?

Research Design

Prior to collecting data, an extensive literature review was conducted around instructional coaching, HQPD for educators, and educator professional learning networks (PLN). To answer the three research questions, seven sources of data were collected from Lakota's coaches: a pre- and post-survey of network participants, a survey of non-network participants, a focus group with participants, an interview with the network facilitator, and coding of the meeting slides and Slack channel.

Key Findings

1.	**Participation in OCN is HQPD**
2.	**OCN Contributed to Coach Learning & Confidence**
3.	**Coaches Prefer OCN, and Cross District Collaboration**
4.	**Additional Districts Need to Join**
5.	**PD Needs: Tech for Coaches; Leverage Coaches PD for Admin**

Lakota's coaches found the network to be a valuable source of professional development that met all seven key components of HQPD cited across the literature. When compared to previous professional development provided in the past two years, coaches favored the network, and in particular the cross-district coach-to-coach collaboration. Furthermore, the OCN contributed to 100% of participants' learning as a coach, and 80% of participants' confidence as a coach.

The most popular suggestion for improvement to the OCN was to have additional districts join.

Furthermore, there are two primary areas of professional development needed to further support coaches. First, coaches need training on the technology tools and programs used by teachers. Second, building principals need support in understanding the role of coaches in the district and how to best support them.

Percent of respondents who selected "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" that Previous Coach PD and OCN met seven HQPD traits.
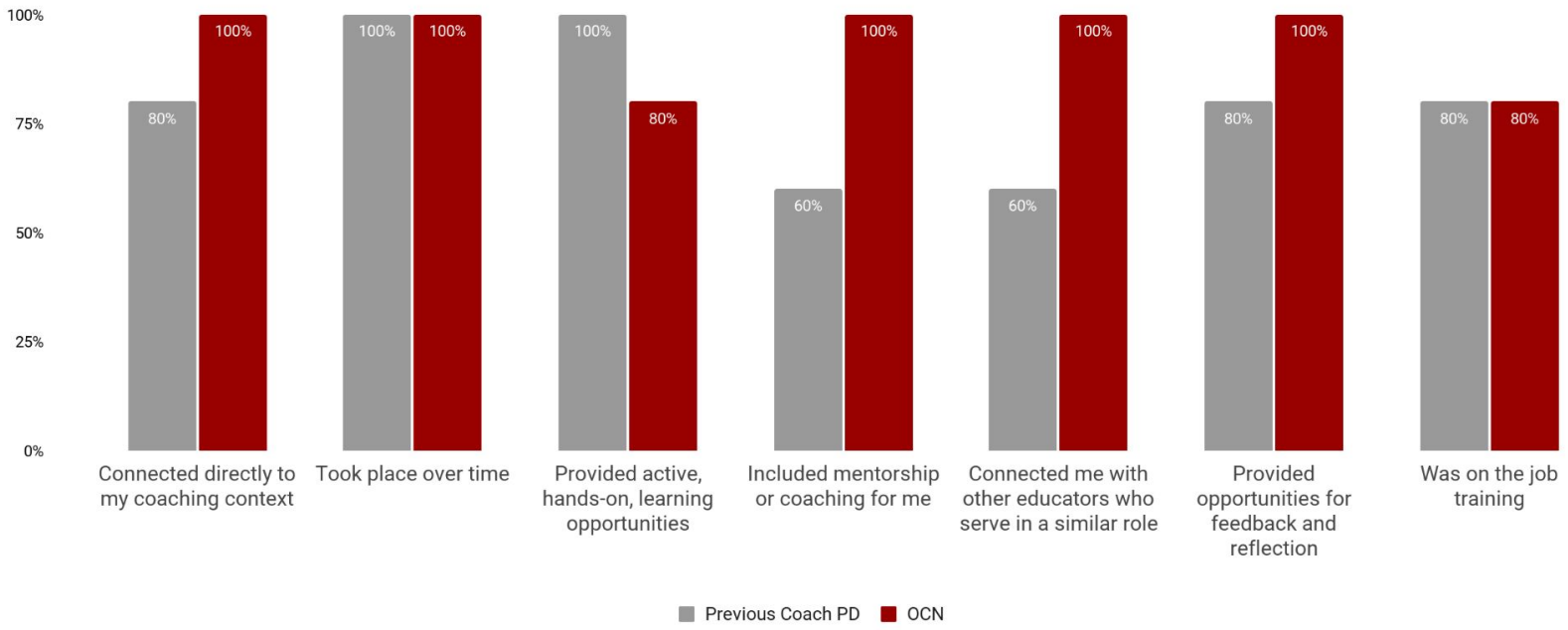
The **importance of working with coaches outside of the district was the most mentioned topic** in the focus group, with coach networking and hearing from different contexts or perspectives the next two highest areas.

Recommendations

All recommendations were formed based on close alignment with the literature and this study's conceptual framework to support learning needs specific to coaches. By ensuring continued HQPD for their coaches, Lakota will, in effect, ensure high-quality instructional support for all teachers in their district.

Continue OCN Bi-weekly

Regular attendance is important to build connections and have meaningful discussions. Weekly meetings may be too large of a time commitment, and monthly is too infrequent. Team Inspire leadership may also consider setting a personal learning expectation, such as encouraging all 17 coaches to join a PLN.

Invite Additional Districts, Including Outside Ohio

The predominant request from Lakota coaches was to extend the network to more districts to ensure they have an opportunity to engage with coaches outside of Lakota and to hear their perspective. Inviting districts outside of Ohio would allow Lakota to network with other similar, innovative districts while providing coaches with the out-of-district coach collaboration they seek.

Avoid Mondays & Include Additional Topics

To ensure regular attendance, Mondays should be avoided. The best days for scheduling may be Wednesday through Friday. Future OCN facilitators should also include pre-planned meeting discussions on 1) defining the role and responsibilities of a coach, and 2) working with building & district administration.

Tech & Shadow PD for Coaches; Leverage Coaches PD for Admin

Additional professional development is needed in three major areas to support the growth and success of Team Inspire coaches. First is the need for ongoing technology-specific training for coaches on tools teachers regularly use, such as their learning management system. Secondly, coaches need an opportunity to experience on-the-job shadowing of other coaches within or outside of Lakota. Finally, providing building administrators with training on how to leverage their instructional coach to both support teachers and achieve building goals would have an astounding impact on instruction across the district.

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Introduction

As teachers are the most prominent in-school determinant of student learning, a great deal of effort is placed on providing them with professional development to improve their teaching. Professional development can take a wide variety of forms, but instructional coaching, in particular, has been found to be one of the most impactful forms resulting in improved teacher instruction and student achievement (Kraft et al., 2018). Instructional coaching models vary, but some of the most popular formats are content-specific coaches (i.e., literacy, math, science, social studies, technology) who may support nearly everyone in their building or even provide district-wide support. The primary role of any coach is to support the professional growth and development of the educators they serve. While coaches are supporting many people within a school system, who is supporting the growth and development of the coaches?

There is an abundance of research on high quality teacher professional development (HQPD), which identifies coaching as HQPD in and of itself (Allen et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone et al., 2017; Drago-Severson, 2008; Booker, 2013). This has led to an increase in coaching positions across schools in the United States and an increase in research focused on characteristics of an effective coaching program and skills of an effective instructional coach. However, research on what HQPD looks like specifically for instructional coaches is less prevalent. Often, coaches are selected because of their content expertise, yet they are provided very little, if any, training on how to support teachers in their new coaching role (Gallucci et al., 2010). The lack of training provided to

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coaches, paired with the lack of understanding on what HQPD looks like for these educators, leaves instructional coaches to seek out their own support.

Instructional coaching, and in particular coaching that supports the use of technology for instruction, has been on the rise since 2000 and has doubled when compared to other school personnel (Hannan & Russell, 2020). In March of 2020, the COVID-19 global pandemic caused schools around the world to shut down, requiring teachers and students to move to virtual classrooms in their homes through the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year and into the following school year. Teachers were left scrambling to figure out how to use digital tools to teach their students and keep them engaged while staring at a screen all day. Digital Promise (2020) found that 90% percent of technology coaches were used more by teachers and administrators to support their teaching during the pandemic than ever before, which only further accelerated the awareness of the need for coaches who support technology for teaching and learning in K-12 schools.

The negative effects COVID-19 had on students in K-12 schools cannot be overstated, with students in vulnerable and underserved populations being hit the hardest (US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2021). The pandemic highlighted just how far we still had to go as a country to provide high-speed internet access and internet-enabled devices at both school *and* home in order for these underserved students to be provided with the same opportunities for academic success as their more fortunate peers. As a result, school leaders put pressure on Congress to act to rectify these inequities.

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The passing of H.R.1319 in March of 2021 infused $121.9 billion into the education

system across the country through a third round of Elementary and Secondary School

Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds. This was in addition to the $67.5 billion that was

distributed in rounds I and II of ESSER funding during April 2020 and January 2021 (US

Department of Education, 2020). Though state and school leaders can choose how to

allocate their funds across many high-need areas outlined in the passing of each bill,

ensuring educator preparedness and closing learning gaps span multiple categories for the

acceptable use of these funds. This provides districts with unique opportunities to target

some of the funding on coaching to support high quality instruction and meaningful

technology integration. As a result, teachers are likely to be moved into the role of a coach

without any training at a faster pace than ever before during a time when it is most critical

that the coach be prepared to support educators.

The increased use of coaches, along with the increased need for coaches in a

post-pandemic world, makes understanding how to provide high quality support to

coaches more important than ever. The little research that does exist on the topic shows

that an opportunity to network with other experienced educators is particularly helpful for

those, such as instructional coaches, who have mastered a skill set (Frank et al., 2011;

Stoezel & Shedrows, 2020). The purpose of this capstone project is to understand the

impact a professional network has on the growth and development of instructional

coaches to help inform development of the rapidly growing profession. It is my hope that

the results of this work will help instructional coaches advocate for and protect time for

their own professional learning, as well as guide district decision-makers on how best to support these powerhouse individuals in their roles.

The partner organization for this capstone project is Lakota Local Schools in West Chester, Ohio, who has a team of 17 instructional coaches across the district. Due to COVID-19, their instructional coaches were unable to gather regularly for their own professional learning with one another. This left coaches feeling isolated and struggling to meet their own professional learning needs. While the pandemic presented new challenges to schools world-wide, it has also helped educators become comfortable with virtual gatherings, making distance-meetings more feasible and appealing. As a result, Lakota formed a virtual professional network of instructional coaches with their own coaches and coaches from select districts across the state. They were interested in understanding the benefits of a professional network on their coaches' growth and development.

Organizational Context

Lakota Local Schools is located just outside of Cincinnati, Ohio, with over 16,000 PreK-12 students and just under 2,000 teachers, administrators, and staff across 20 schools. Students are 77% white, 8% black, 7% Asian, 4% Hispanic, and 3% with two or more races. The median household income is $106,041 per year. Lakota is the 10th largest school district in Ohio, and the district is often recognized by other educators on both the state and national levels as one of the more innovative districts in Ohio. Their ideas, models, and resources are sought after by other teachers and education leaders. While they often find themselves sharing materials and resources, they do not find themselves

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gathering resources from others nearly as frequently. Evidence of this sentiment was

expressed by coaches during the focus group and by district administrators.

The district has a team of 17 Innovation Specialists, or Instructional Coaches, who

support educators across the entire district with both curriculum and use of technology for

teaching and learning. The 17 Innovation Specialists are known as Team Inspire, and they

are each assigned to coach a certain building or grade band of teachers. An individual

Innovation Specialist supports about 50 teachers in addition to the staff in the building.

Each Innovation Specialist is responsible for cultivating a culture of continuous learning,

strengthening personalized instructional strategies and resources, promoting the

innovative use of time and space for personalized learning, advocating for equitable digital

access for all students, leading the use of data to inform personalized learning, and

collaborating with leadership and various stakeholders to carry out district initiatives. These

job responsibilities are founded in the latest Future Ready Instructional Coaches™

framework (2018) to help guide Team Inspire's work. The Innovation Specialists will be

referred to as "coaches" throughout this study to allow for consistency with the literature.

Prior to the 2017-2018 school year, Team Inspire was divided into two different

roles: 1) content instructional coaches (i.e., literacy, math, etc.), and 2) instructional

technology coaches who supported the use of technology for teaching and learning. The

district leadership team made the decision to merge the two groups in 2017 to better

support instruction in the 21st century. Utilization of technology in the classroom was no

longer an optional addition to *spice up* a lesson, but rather an expectation across all grade

levels and content areas. For this reason, all coaches who support instruction are now

expected to be well-versed in common technology tools and skills.

While Team Inspire is traditionally focused on providing HQPD to the educators they

serve, less attention has been given to their own individual growth and development as

instructional coaches. COVID-19 exacerbated feelings of isolation and the need to support

all educators, driving Lakota leadership to prioritize trying to better understand how to

maximize support for the individuals (coaches) who support all teachers. An opportunity to

network with other experienced educators is particularly helpful for those who have

mastered a skill set, such as a technology-savvy teacher or a stellar ELA teacher (Frank et

al., 2011; Stoezel & Shedrows, 2020). The same can be assumed for instructional coaches

since individuals are typically placed in the coaching role after displaying master teacher

skills with students. Many of Lakota's coaches were hired after teaching within the district.

In an effort to explore the impact professional networks have on their instructional

coaches, Lakota decided to form a network for coaches with members from their own

Team Inspire and coaches from school districts across the state of Ohio. They called this

network the Ohio Coaching Network (OCN). Sheri Simpson, the assistant director for Team

Inspire at Lakota and the OCN facilitator, shared that her primary goal for the first year of

the OCN was to get a proof of concept for the network and connect Lakota coaches with

other coaches outside the district to form relationships and have a space to discuss topics

specific to coaching. Inspiration to connect Lakota's coaches with coaches outside of the

district came from Ms. Simpson and Krista Heidenreich, the Director of Team Inspire, who

had been placed in a cross-district network with other district leaders to support one

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another through COVID-19 specific challenges. Ms. Heidenreich and Ms. Simpson had such

a positive experience networking with leaders outside of Lakota, they wanted that same

positive experience for their fellow coaches.

OCN had a total of 28 voluntary participants from approximately eight school

districts across the state of Ohio; eight of the participants were Lakota coaches. The 28

participants were divided into three smaller groups, based on availability, to help facilitate

discussion during hour-long synchronous meetings held on a weekly basis over Zoom. The

OCN began mid-March and ran through mid-May for the first year and each group met

seven to nine times throughout the three months (spring break and state testing caused

some meetings to be cancelled). There was a Monday group, a Tuesday group, and a

Wednesday group that each met at a different time of day during the school day.

During the meetings, each group used a Google Slides presentation that Ms.

Simpson prepared ahead of time. There was a separate slide deck for each group; however,

the slides and topics were the same. Separate slide decks allowed for group members to

add notes or their own ideas, and to request discussion topics for the week. Each week,

new slides were added to the beginning of the group slide deck, so all notes from each

meeting were housed in one location. Additionally, a Slack workspace was set up that

allowed all 28 participants to have asynchronous communication with one another in a

single location.

Each meeting began with a *Gratitude* slide that allowed participants to share good

things going on in their lives, personally or professionally, to start the meeting on a positive

note. Prior to each meeting, Ms. Simpson would prepare an activity or reading related to

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coaching and leadership to help foster the conversation if needed. Throughout the week, each participant could add to the *Topics and Questions for Discussion* slide that ultimately guided the conversations during the synchronous virtual meetings. If participants had something on their mind, the group always discussed those topics together before the pre-planned activity. If time allowed or if few topics were added by group members, the group would complete the activity and discuss how the topics supported their work as coaches for the remainder of the meeting. It was Team Inspire's hope that these networking meetings would prove to be a positive learning experience for their coaches.

Problem of Practice

The role of an instructional coach is fairly unique to school systems. Unlike classroom teachers, there are far fewer coaches in a district, if the district even has coaches at all. Typically, a school district may have only one coach per building, per district, or even a single coach shared between multiple districts. This creates far fewer opportunities for a coach to network and discuss topics related directly to their coaching responsibilities with others who serve in the same or similar roles. It is incredibly important for coaches to be provided with professional learning opportunities around coaching, working with adult learners, and developing professional development for others. Inadequate access to HQPD can prevent coaches from being clear about their job responsibilities, leave them ill-equipped to support adult learners, and oblige them to find their own professional learning opportunities outside of the district (Gallucci et al., 2010; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2020).

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Providing coaches with ongoing professional learning opportunities can take many forms. Networking opportunities are particularly helpful for experienced educators (Frank et al., 2011; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2020). Research also shows that coaches are in need of coaching-specific training and benefit most when they are provided with meaningful interactions with other coaches that relate directly to their context (Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2020).

Lakota is unique in that they have a large team of full-time instructional coaches within their own district. Prior to the pandemic, Team Inspire used weekly team meetings to discuss internal matters related to instruction and technology at Lakota and to collaborate with one another on district needs, such as planning professional development to provide teachers on district in-service days. They would also use this meeting time to focus on their professional learning needs as they arose, such as a technology training or discussion around how to best work with reluctant teachers. Due to COVID-19 and the amount of time spent supporting teachers, their coaches were unable to hold the weekly meetings designated for their own professional learning as a team. This left Lakota's coaches feeling isolated in their role and struggling to keep up with the demands to support teachers. With the onset of remote schooling, educators became more comfortable with virtual gatherings, which made a distance-PLN much more feasible and approachable for Team Inspire.

Investing in a professional network takes a significant amount of the individual's time. Lakota currently does not understand the return on investment for the time they are allowing their coaches to dedicate to the network during the school day. Lakota leadership

is interested in learning the extent to which a network of instructional coaches provides

HQPD opportunities to those within the network, how participating in a network increases

the overall confidence and ability of a coach to support teachers, and how networking with

other coaches outside of Lakota impacts the overall experience. Failing to evaluate these

questions could allow Lakota to dedicate valuable resources to an endeavor that does not

prove beneficial for coaches' professional growth. Inversely, failing to understand the

impact could prevent coaches from participating in a HQPD opportunity should leadership

no longer permit coaches to participate in the network during the school day due to their

lack of understanding the impact on the coaches.

      Due to the significant time investment of the participating Lakota coaches and for

Ms. Simpson to facilitate meetings, the results of this quality improvement study will help

inform district leaders if they should continue to allow Team Inspire to dedicate time to a

professional network during the work day. The results and recommendations will also help

inform current and future OCN facilitators on how to make the network as impactful as

possible for participants to ensure that coaches are benefitting to the fullest extent. For

example, how frequently should meetings be held, how should activities be structured, and

who should participate? Lastly, the study will also provide insight to leaders at Lakota

regarding additional training and support needed for Team Inspire to most effectively

support the nearly 2,000 educators across the district.

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Literature Review

The few studies on coaching and professional development for instructional

coaches call out the scarcity of research on the topic (Gallucci, 2010; Stoetzel & Shedrow,

2020). I examined the research on instructional coaching in general to better understand

the factors and coaching models that lead to changes in teacher instruction and improved

student achievement. This also helped isolate specific skills that coaches need that are

different from a classroom teacher. Next, I focused on studies that identified HQPD for

educators in general, assuming that many of the identified traits of HQPD would also be

necessary for instructional coaches. Lastly, I turned my attention to research on PLN for

educators to better understand what makes an educator network beneficial for the

participants.

Instructional Coaching

Instructional coaching of teachers has become a promising form of HQPD over the

past few decades; evidence of this was first researched by Joyce and Showers in the 1980s.

After nearly 40 years of schools investing in instructional coaching, the role still varies

drastically in everything from title of the position, to job responsibilities, and to coaching

models in which the role is carried out with teachers (Cox, 2015; Gallucci et al., 2010; Kraft

et al., 2018; Ritter, 2021; Slater & Simmons, 2001; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2020). The literature

review will be divided into three sections to better understand instructional coaching:

understanding what an instructional coach is, important components of successful coaches

and coaching programs, and HQPD needs specific to coaches.

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What is an Instructional Coach?

Kraft et al. (2018) conducted a meta-analysis of over 60 causal research design studies to better understand the effectiveness of coaching programs on improving teacher instruction and increasing student achievement. When looking across the 60 studies used in their analysis, they identified and defined effective coaching models as having the following five characteristics: where coaching is (a) individualized, meaning the coach and teacher meet one on one; (b) intensive, where the coach and teacher meet every couple of weeks at a minimum; (c) sustained, where the meetings take place over an extended period of time, such as a semester or year; (d) context-specific, meaning the coaching takes place in and about the teacher's own classroom; and (e) focused, where the meetings are focused on practicing and implementing specific skills (Kraft et al., 2018).

In addition to the one-on-one work coaches do with teachers, the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has identified seven other characteristics of the role of a coach in their Standards for Coaches (2019). These standards were developed from a combination of research and global practitioner input. ISTE states that coaches are expected to be 1) change agents who inspire educators and leaders, 2) connected learners who not only model effective teaching and learning but also invest in their own learning through PLN, 3) collaborators who engage with teachers and leaders in the teaching and learning process for both students and the teacher, 4) learning designer, that pushes the coach to model and support educators to design learning experiences and environments that meet the needs of all students, 5) professional learning facilitators who plan, provide, and evaluate group professional learning opportunities, 6) data-driven decision-makers

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that supports teachers use of data to inform instruction, and 7) digital citizen advocates

who model and support teachers and students with the realities of living and learning in a

world surrounded by technology.

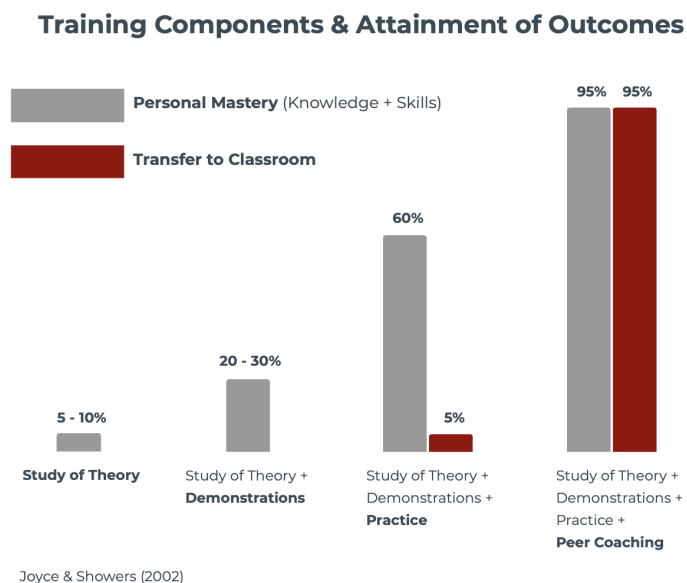***Components of Successful Coaches and Coaching Programs***

In addition to the expectations of the role of a coach as identified in the ISTE

Standards and the Kraft et al. (2018) study, additional research on coaching identifies

further skills and necessary components for an effective coaching program. It is crucial to

the success of coaching programs that the coach and teachers have a positive relationship

since they are often working through difficult changes in their practice that require

teachers to be vulnerable with the coach (Gallucci et al., 2010; Jacobs et al., 2017; Joyce &

Showers, 1982; Kraft et al., 2018; Slater & Simmons, 2001; Stein et al., 2021). Furthermore,

coaches should not hold an evaluative role with the teachers (Kraft et al., 2018; Slater &

Simmons, 2001) to protect the positive open relationship that allows the teacher to be

vulnerable with the coach. Coaching programs need adequate time dedicated to the

coaching process to allow for classroom observations and reflective conversations, in

addition to learning new skills (Gallucci et al., 2010). And finally, coaching programs are

most successful when paired with group training programs that allow for initial learning

and practice with new skills (Booker, 2013; Joyce & Showers, 1982; Kraft et al., 2018), and

when administrators work with the coach to align coaching efforts to school initiatives

(Gallucci et al., 2010).

Most of the research surrounding instructional coaching has sought to understand

the role, and the conditions and models in which coaches are most successful to ensure

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coaching is truly HQPD for teachers. In some of the earliest research on coaching, Joyce

and Showers (1982) found that coaching is most effective in helping teachers with the

"transfer problem." In other words, coaching is particularly effective when paired with other

training to help the teacher transfer the skills learned in the training session(s) back into

their individual classroom context. Later research by Joyce and Showers (2002) found that

coaching was not only significantly more likely to help teachers with personal mastery of

skills, but more importantly, coaching was 90-95% more likely to help teachers translate

those skills back to the classroom when compared to other training components (see

Figure 1 below). The chart shows that other means of training, such as study of theory,

demonstrations, and practice, allow teachers to begin to master the knowledge and skills,

but it is not until coaching is added to the training that actual implementation of those

learned skills is almost guaranteed to take place with students in the classroom.

Figure 1.

Training Components and Attainment of Outcomes

Training Components & Attainment of Outcomes

Personal Mastery (Knowledge + Skills)

Transfer to Classroom

95% 95%

60%

20 - 30%

5 - 10%

5%

Study of Theory

Study of Theory +
Demonstrations

Study of Theory +
Demonstrations +
Practice

Study of Theory +
Demonstrations +
Practice +
Peer Coaching

Joyce & Showers (2002)

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Slater and Simmons (2001) found that teachers reported improved teaching techniques and felt less isolated as a result of the peer-coaching program implemented in one high school. While Slater and Simmons caution when generalizing the results of their 2001 study, I mention it here because part of the study design included four training sessions about how to coach for participants, which could be a contributing factor to their positive results. Kraft et al. (2018) found large positive effects on teacher instruction (0.49 standard deviations) and smaller positive effects (0.18 standard deviations) on student achievement across 60 causal research studies, declaring coaching a favorable method of professional development when compared to research on HQPD and most other school-based intervention programs that have been researched. It is clear that well-prepared instructional coaches are highly effective. With such great influence on instruction and student achievement, it is less clear why coaches are not provided more professional development specifically to their role and responsibilities.

HQPD for Coaches

More often than not, coaches are moved into the role without being provided the training necessary to ensure they are an effective coach (Gallucci et al., 2010; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2020). As Gallucci et al. (2010) found, coaches are often learning new skills, content, and pedagogical approaches alongside the teachers they are coaching. How to implement strategies as a teacher and how to coach a teacher on implementing those same strategies are two different skill sets, thus requiring dedicated time for coaches to learn with other coaches. Consistent with other literature on HQPD needs of coaches,

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Stoetzel and Shedrow's (2020) case study of four instructional coaches enrolled in a coach

training program found that

- participating coaches did not receive training before assuming the role;

- participants did not clearly understand their role;

- job-embedded activities that were connected to the coaches working context

  were most beneficial; and

- social interactions with other coaches were very important to their growth.

Regardless of whether a coach works in an urban, suburban, or rural setting,

opportunities to network with other coaches and being provided with professional

development specific to the role of a coach leads to more rigorous coaching (Hannan &

Russell, 2020). Furthermore, Stoetzel and Shedrow (2020) found discussion topics and the

space in which discussions take place to be most important in facilitating positive

interactions between coaches. With instructional coaching on the rise, more research on

how best to support these individuals needs to be conducted.

High Quality Teacher Professional Development

With so little research on HQPD specifically designed for coaches, I reviewed the

existing literature around HQPD for educators in general, most of which focuses on

teachers. HQPD for teachers has been extensively researched within the field of education

and a common body of knowledge exists outlining the key elements of HQPD. For teacher

professional development to be considered HQPD, it must lead to changes in teacher

practice as well as improvements in student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al.,

2017). Still, it is often difficult to adequately measure the impact of teacher professional

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development due to factors outside of the single professional development experience or

one's ability to measure intended outcomes from the professional development (Booker,

2013). To capture as much of the literature as possible, I focused primarily on

meta-analyses, high-level organization and government reports, and high-quality

experimental designs that evaluated the impact of implementation in the classroom and on

student learning as a result of the professional development.

Seven main characteristics of HQPD emerged across the literature. HQPD (1)

focuses on specific content or a single topic, (2) takes place over time, (3) includes active

learning, (4) includes mentorship and coaching, (5) utilizes feedback and reflection

opportunities, (6) builds a community among participants, and (7) is job-embedded (Allen et

al., 2011; Booker, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone et al., 2016;

Drago-Severson, 2008; Frank et al., 2011; Garet et al., 2001; Roth et al., 2011; Yoon et al.,

2007).

Professional development that is focused on a **teacher's specific content area** or a

single skill is important to lead to changes in teacher practice (Darling-Hammond et al.,

2017; Desimone et al., 2016; Frank et al., 2011; Garet et al., 2001; Roth et al., 2011).

Furthermore, Frank et al. (2011) define this as "focus" in their "focus, fiddle, friends" model,

and suggests that the specific content and skill focus is most important to educators in

their early stages of adopting new skills. Though their research was centered around

adoption of technology skills, it is important to take this "focus" perspective into

consideration when working with coaches. Younger teachers and newer coaches alike may

be less familiar than their more veteran peers based solely on the fact that they have less experience in their role.

Additional characteristics of HQPD include the facts that the professional learning takes place over a **sustained duration of time** (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Garet et al., 2001; Roth et al., 2011; Yoon et al., 2007), and that it includes **active, hands-on learning** experiences (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, et al., 2016; Frank et al., 2011; Garet et al., 2001). In their report analyzing nine studies that met What Works Clearinghouse standards, Yoon et al. (2007) found that studies showing a significant, positive impact on student learning included at least 14 hours of professional development for teachers, and an average of 49 total hours across all the studies included in the analysis. This highlights that a one-and-done (in other words, a one-time) professional development experience is not enough to create sustained change in teacher practice. Similarly, coaches need ongoing training to hone their coaching skills. Frank et al. (2011) describe the importance of active learning, or "fiddle" in their model, after a teacher has been initially introduced to a new skill and has reached an intermediate level of implementation. Coaches would benefit from this same opportunity to practice new skills they are learning prior to working with teachers on how to implement those vary skills.

The next two most-identified characteristics of professional development that leads to changes in teacher practice are the importance of a teacher having an experienced **mentor or one-on-one coaching** to help them implement the skills (Allen et al., 2011; Booker, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Drago-Severson, 2008), and the importance of creating **a space for teachers to work within a community of other teachers**

(Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Drago-Severson, 2008; Frank et al., 2011; Garet et al., 2001).

Multiple studies cite significant gains on student achievement when a teacher's skills

learned during the initial professional development also included mentorship or coaching

post-training (Allen et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Joyce & Showers, 1982; Joyce

& Showers, 2002; Neergaard Booker, 2013). Coaches would also benefit from having a

more experienced mentor-coach or group of coaches that they can turn to when working

through problems specific to the role of a coach. In their final step of the three-step "focus,

fiddle, friends" model, Frank et al. (2011) identify "friends" as the opportunity for teachers

to network and discuss learned skills with other teachers to continue to grow their own

curiosity and to encourage further implementation in the classroom, particularly after they

have somewhat mastered the skills. Additionally, Garet et al. (2001) specifically identified

the importance of a teacher's ability to work with others from the same school, grade level,

or content area. Networking with others in a similar role is also reflected in the literature

specific to instructional coaches (Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2020). This further validates the

argument that the characteristics of HQPD that benefit teachers can also benefit coaches.

The final two of the seven most commonly-identified characteristics in the literature

on HQPD are the importance of utilizing **feedback and reflection** with teachers as they

evaluate their teaching practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Gallagher et al., 2017), and

creating professional development opportunities that are **job-embedded**, or take place

during the course of the school day (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Gallagher et al. (2017)

examined the effectiveness of professional development for a very well-known program in

K-12 education, the National Writing Project, and they found that the regular, formative

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feedback provided to teachers significantly contributed to their implementation and refinement of the skills. As much as reflection is important for teachers, it is also crucial for a coach to have opportunities to reflect on their own practice in order to improve. Lastly, with so many job responsibilities to take care of during the course of the school day, coaches cannot be expected to find their own learning outside of working hours. It is important for coach learning to take a job-embedded place during the school day.

After examining the research on HQPD for teachers, it is obvious why coaching has become increasingly popular as a way to support educator growth. Desimone and Pak (2017) directly connect positive impacts of coaching to many of the seven characteristics identified above, including that coaching is content-focused, is primarily an active learning experience where the teacher and coach are engaging in the work together, takes place over extended periods of time, often creates a community of educators who are either working with the coach in a small group or working on similar skill sets at the same time, and that coaching is inherently job-embedded and will see the best outcomes when the focus of the work aligns with other school initiatives and the teacher's curriculum. Next, I will turn my attention to examining literature on PLN, as research has indicated for both teachers and, specifically for coaches, that professional networking opportunities are important for the growth and development of educators.

Professional Learning Networks for Educators

Much of the literature surrounding educator Professional Learning Networks (PLN) is situated in the context of Communities of Practice (CoP). Lave and Wenger

(1991) describe CoP as a "living curriculum" where participants learn by engaging

with a community of practitioners, whereby the act of engaging is part of the

learning process. The teacher and learner roles shift based on topics and tasks at

hand, and the knowledge each individual possesses at the time. A CoP is not just a

gathering of friends or colleagues. There must be more purpose to the group.

According to Wenger (2011), three characteristics must be present to be considered

a CoP. These are (1) the domain, where members have shared interest in,

knowledge of, and commitment to advancing the topic; (2) community, where

members must interact and learn from one another; and (3) practice, where

members create shared resources together.

CoP include the following activities in which members engage: problem

solving, requesting information, seeking experience to apply to a current situation,

reusing materials, coordinating resources, building an argument to take back to

their own organization, growing confidence in skills and understanding, discussing

developments in the field, documenting projects, visiting to observe one another,

mapping combined knowledge, and identifying gaps in understanding (Wenger,

2011). Based on this framework, it is easy to see how educator PLN are a CoP at

their core.

PLN positively support instructional leaders' growth, in particular by

encouraging leaders to try new things and providing a space to think critically and

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reflect on their own practice (Trust et al., 2018). PLN that include opportunities for

participants to connect both in-person and virtually due to video-conferencing

capabilities provide participants with the greatest possibility of a rich experience

since participation is not geographically bound (Haas et al., 2020). The people who

participate, the space in which the PLN meets, and the tools used to facilitate

network discussions and activities are the three factors that most impact the PLN

(Krutka et al., 2017).

Trust and Prestridge (2021) found five elements that shape participants'

actions within the PLN, whether it is online or face-to-face: goals, time, confidence,

relationships, and space dynamics. Participants' individual goals influence the types

of actions they engage in. For example, a participant with a personal goal of social

growth may engage in different activities than a participant with a career growth

goal. Additionally, Haas et al. (2020) encourage members to set their own goals

prior to joining a PLN as a means of directing the activities in which they engage.

The amount of time an individual has available to engage with a PLN will obviously

impact one's participation. A lack of available time to meaningfully engage with

their PLN was a common concern of participants in the Trust and Prestridge (2021)

study. Additionally, confidence in one's own ability to interact within online spaces

will either encourage contributions from those more comfortable with technology

or inhibit participation from those less confident in their ability to share within an

online space. Building positive relationships is not only crucial for a meaningful coach-teacher relationship, but it is also important for members within a PLN to feel safe and trust one another. Allowing oneself to be vulnerable and open in professional relationships results in a more effective PLN experience. And lastly, the space in which the PLN takes place includes the locations and tools that influence the types of interaction that are possible among the PLN.

Drawing from research on CoP, the most benefit will be derived from an educator PLN when each individual is actively participating in both sharing and gaining knowledge. The goal of any PLN should be to structure the space, activities, and topics in a way that will maximize participation by members.

The literature review has defined the role of a coach, identified skills and circumstances necessary for successful coaching programs, defined necessary components of HQPD, and examined factors that lead to a robust and meaningful PLN experience for educators. The next section will describe how these three areas from the literature review weave together to create the conceptual framework for this study.

Conceptual Framework

Taking what we know about HQPD for educators in general and pairing it with the little we know that is specific to instructional coaches and with literature about educator

PLN, we can provide a framework for an instructional coach network that is dedicated to providing HQPD for coaches.

The question is, will a network made up of instructional coaches across the region prove to provide valuable professional learning opportunities to those within the network compared to PD provided in the past? More importantly, do the coaches who participate report learning gains and an increase in their overall confidence to perform their roles? By better understanding the role of a network in coaches' professional growth, we can better identify where additional support is needed. See Figure 2 below.

Figure 2.

Conceptual Framework of a Professional Network Dedicated to Providing HQPD for Coaches
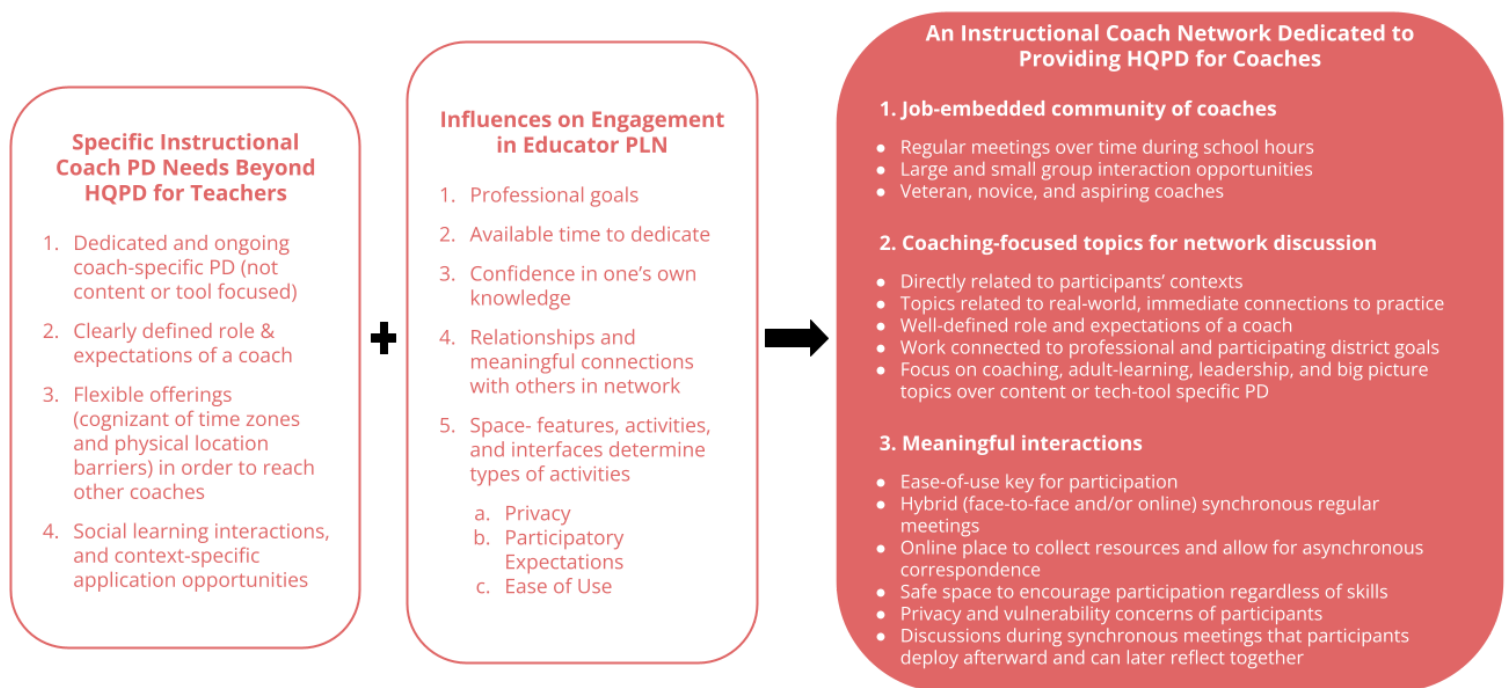
The framework first and foremost assumes that coaches need the same seven traits of HQPD identified in the teacher-focused literature: content or topic specific, takes place

over time, includes active learning, includes mentorship or coaching, utilizes feedback and reflection, builds a community of participants, and is job-embedded. These traits are woven throughout the third section of the framework, *An Instructional Coach Network Dedicated to Providing HQPD for Coaches*, most notably a "job-embedded community of coaches," which combines HQPD traits seven (job-embedded) and six (community of participants).

In order to come to this conclusion, the framework first takes into account the specific professional learning needs of a coach beyond those of a classroom teacher as identified in the literature, such as the need to clearly understand the role and expectations of a coach or the importance of flexible offerings to allow coaches the opportunity to network with other coaches who, more often than not, are located in different districts. These specific needs can be found in the first section of the framework, *Specific Instructional Coach Needs Beyond HQPD for Teachers*, and are also woven throughout the third section of the framework.

The second section of the framework, *Influences on Engagement in Educator PLN,* takes the literature around educator PLN into account. As the literature states, the most robust educator PLN are dependent on quality interactions among participants. This section of the framework outlines the necessary considerations, such as the space in which the network gatherings take place, that need to be considered to best foster a community of trust and participation among the members of the OCN. As with the HQPD traits and specific needs of coaches, the factors that contribute to high engagement in educator PLN are also woven throughout the third section of the framework.

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The intent of the third section of the framework is to combine the research in all three areas: HQPD, instructional coaching, and PLN to provide a guide for making a dedicated coach network as impactful as possible for the participating coaches. For example, the "job-embedded community of coaches" section combines research from all three areas. The "job embedded community of coaches" combines research from HQPD on the importance of being job-embedded and sustained over time, and pairs it with the specific instructional coaching needed to network with other coaches. The "large and small group interaction" component to this part of the framework draws on PLN research about the importance of prioritizing opportunities for both small and large group interactions to build trust among participants in small group settings while also allowing the exchange of many ideas in large group settings. The inclusion of "veteran, novice, and aspiring coaches" takes into account the idea of shifting roles based on expertise within a community of practice, the importance of the confidence in one's own knowledge in order to participate within a PLN, and the need for instructional coaches to collaborate with others in their unique role. It is the intention that the third section of this framework will prove useful in the formation and ongoing facilitation of the OCN.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study to better understand how to support the growth and development of instructional coaches.

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RQ1: To what extent does a professional network of instructional coaches provide

HQPD opportunities to those within the network? How does this compare to

professional development provided in the past?

RQ2: Do instructional coaches report learning gains and increased confidence in

their coaching abilities as a result of engaging in a network of coaches?

RQ3: What additional support is needed for the growth and development of

participants beyond the network?

The first question seeks to understand if there is any benefit to participating in the OCN as

well as how the OCN participation compares to other professional development the

coaches have experienced. The second question expands on this by attempting to

understand if there are specific learning gains and an increase in participants' confidence

with their coaching abilities as a result of participating in the OCN. With such little research

around HQPD related specifically to instructional coaches, answers to these two questions

could illuminate a promising source of professional development for instructional coaches,

especially if Lakota can allocate adequate time and resources to supporting this type of

learning for Team Inspire. The third research question seeks to further support findings

and recommendations in this study and guide Lakota's decision-makers on future choices

related to professional development opportunities for their coaches.

Project Design

To address the project questions, I conducted a pre- and post-quantitative and

qualitative survey of Lakota participants, a survey of Lakota non-participating coaches, an

interview with the OCN facilitator, and a focus group with Lakota participants. I also examined meeting slides and the network's Slack channel. The following section describes in greater detail the data that was collected.

Data Collection

In early March of 2021, a pre-survey was sent to all eight participating Lakota coaches. Next, a focus group was conducted with four of the eight participants. Prior to the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year, a survey was sent to all Lakota coaches who did not participate in the OCN. At the conclusion of the school year, a post-survey was sent to all participants who had responded to the pre-survey and an interview was conducted with the OCN facilitator. Initially, the group planned to continue throughout the summer of 2021, but decided to take a break after a very trying school year with COVID-19. The initial research plan included a second focus group at the conclusion of the network meetings, but scheduling this was unsuccessful due to the timing of the school year.

Additionally, the meeting slides containing discussion topics from all three groups, as well as the Slack Workspace, were collected for qualitative coding. I observed two separate meeting groups to better understand the flow of the network meetings and used Team Inspire documents, such as their job descriptions, to better understand the specific role of coaches at Lakota since the role varies from district to district. Table 1 below outlines each research question with the corresponding data collection methods that determined the results and influenced the recommendations.

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Table 1.

Research Questions and Data Collection Method

Research Question	Data Collection Method
RQ1: To what extent does a professional network of instructional coaches provide HQPD opportunities to those within the network? How does this compare to professional development provided in the past?	1. Pre-Survey 2. Focus Group 3. Post-Survey 4. Coding of Meeting Slides 5. Coding of Slack channel
RQ2: Do instructional coaches report learning gains and increased confidence in their coaching abilities as a result of engaging in a network of coaches?	1. Pre-Survey 2. Post-Survey
RQ3: What additional support is needed for the growth and development of participants beyond the network?	1. Post-Survey 2. Interview with OCN Facilitator 3. Survey of Non-participants 4. Focus Group

Participating Coaches Pre-Survey

The confidential pre-survey was sent using Google Forms to all eight of the OCN

participating coaches from Lakota, seven of whom responded. The survey consisted of 21

questions which were informed by the conceptual framework and the teacher section

regarding professional development from the Tennessee Educator Teacher Survey

(Tennessee Education Research Alliance, 2020). The literature and conceptual framework

around coach-specific needs informed many of the questions by asking participants to rate

their confidence against individual job responsibilities of a coach as identified in the

literature (i.e., "I am confident in my abilities as a coach to work one on one with teachers

to support their individual needs."). There was also a series of questions that asked

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respondents to identify if previous training aligned with the seven HQPD traits identified in the literature review (i.e., "The training I received specific to instructional coaching provided active, hands-on learning opportunities."). Most questions were a Lickert scale rating of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. Prior to distributing the survey, a cognitive interview was conducted to maximize the survey validity with four instructional coaches that were not participating in the network.

This survey established a baseline for previous professional development that had been provided to coaches over the previous two years. Two years was chosen to include time prior to COVID-19 school closures to get a better understanding of typical training that is provided. Additionally, the survey sought to understand other networks the coaches participate in, how they currently participate in those networks, and to better understand why they chose to participate in the OCN. Lastly, the pre-survey collected baseline data for coaches' confidence in their ability to perform various tasks specific to their coaching role. The complete survey has been provided in Appendix A.

Focus Group

The focus group was conducted over Zoom with four participating Lakota coaches after the pre-survey was sent and the OCN had officially begun. Focus group participants were selected based on the grade levels they taught and the OCN groups in which they participated. This allowed me to capture coaches who served the most grade bands (grades three through 12) as well as a member from each of the three OCN groups: Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. The focus group helped clarify questions from the pre-survey, provided a deeper understanding of the prior professional development Lakota coaches

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valued, illuminated coaches' reasons for joining the OCN, and provided a deeper

understanding of the professional development needs the coaches had beyond what had

previously been provided. My intention was to conduct a second focus group with

participants, but the timing of summer break and a busy back-to-school season did not

allow for this second focus group to take place. A $10 Panera gift card was offered to

participants to encourage participation.

Focus Group Questions:
1. Describe the best professional learning experience you have ever had as a coach. What made it leave a lasting impression on you?
2. What does high quality professional learning look like for you as a coach?
3. I know from the survey, each of you participate in a PLN.
    a. What causes you to participate in that network?
    b. What causes you not to participate in that network?
4. What opportunities have you had to engage with and learn from instructional coaches outside of Lakota?
    a. How has this impacted your learning as a coach?
5. What are your expectations for the new coach network?
6. What do you hope to get out of the new coach network?

Non-Participating Coaches Survey

A confidential survey was sent using Google Forms to the nine members of Team

Inspire who chose not to participate in the OCN, four of whom responded. The survey

consisted of nine questions to better understand why they chose not to participate in the

OCN during the current school year, and to understand if they planned to participate the

following school year, along with the reasons behind that decision. The intention of this

survey was to better understand if coaches who did not participate wanted to participate,

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and if so, why they could not participate in order to better inform recommendations around the network. The complete survey can be found in the Appendix C.

Participating Coaches Post-Survey

The confidential post-survey was sent to the seven participating coaches who responded to the pre-survey to allow for comparison data, five of whom responded. The post-survey consisted of 19 questions, many of which were the same as the pre-survey questions to identify any learning gains or increase in confidence for the various roles a coach performs. The post-survey included additional questions to understand if the OCN provided HQPD as identified in the literature, as well as to understand how the coaches engaged with the network and the perceived impact the network had on their professional development. Open-ended questions brought to light additional support that is needed for the growth and development of participants beyond the network. Most questions were a Lickert scale rating of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. Prior to distributing the survey, a cognitive interview with four instructional coaches who were not participating in the network was conducted to maximize the survey validity . A $5 Panera gift card was offered to the seven coaches to encourage a response during the summer. The complete survey can be found in Appendix B.

OCN Facilitator Interview

An interview was conducted with Ms. Simpson, the OCN facilitator, during the summer after the network meetings had concluded. Ms. Simpson not only coordinated and facilitated all of the OCN meetings, but she was recently moved into a leadership role on Team Inspire. This gave her both a unique perspective on how the OCN impacted the

participating coaches and the ability to compare that to the non-participating coaches. The

intention of this interview was to provide helpful information about the structure of the

network as compared to PLN literature and to better understand the impact the network

has had on participating vs non-participating coaches from a leadership perspective.

OCN Facilitator Interview Protocol
1. What goals did you have for OCN this first year?
2. How did you decide what topics to discuss?
3. How did you decide on the structure (synchronous meetings, small groups, slide decks, Slack)?
4. How did the structure - set dates/times, live meetings, slide deck, etc.- work?
5. Were certain groups more participatory?
   a. Why do you think that is?
6. Was the Slack utilized in the way you envisioned?
   a. Why do you think that is?
7. In what ways was OCN successful?
8. In what areas would you make changes moving forward?
9. What changes have you seen in the coaches who participated?
10. Have you noticed any differences in the coaches who participated vs the coaches who did not?

Meeting Slides and Slack Workspace

Each of the three network groups' slide decks were approximately 70 slides,

depending on how much information was added by the individual group members. The

meeting slides allowed me to compare topics discussed during the OCN meetings with

topics the literature says coaches need to have covered in their own professional

development and this, in turn, helped inform if the network was HQPD for coaches. It also

allowed me to determine if particular groups were more active in adding their own

requested discussion topics to take place during the synchronous meetings. It is important

to note that the coding of meeting topics is based solely on what was added to the slides, and may have actually varied slightly based on the synchronous conversations.

Slack is a widely-used communication tool that allows for group synchronous and asynchronous communication that is organized into discussion topics, known as channels. PLN literature identified the importance of having synchronous and asynchronous communication for members (Trust & Prestridge, 2021), so it was important to understand how and if this type of communication took place within the OCN. The OCN Slack workspace had eight channels that all 28 participating members were invited to join so that all group members could correspond with one another regardless of the small group they were placed into for synchronous virtual meetings. I was able to export all public channels to code the conversations.

Data Analysis

Surveys

To begin analysis on the pre-survey, I separated the questions into groups. Groups of questions included demographic information, confidence in abilities, hours spent on previous training, previous HQPD related specifically to coaching, how previous professional development topics transferred to individual coach confidence, how previous professional development topics transferred to individual learning, time spent with other PLN, how coaches engage with their current PLN, and their reason for joining the OCN. Separating the questions into groups allowed me to segment out the parts of the survey that would help answer research questions one and two by understanding the coaches'

previous professional development experiences, and to get baseline data to later

determine if coaches report learning gains and increased confidence in the post-survey.

I used the same process for the participant post-survey to separate out groups of

questions. This allowed me to easily compare pre- and post-survey responses to answer

part of research question two pertaining to increased confidence. Questions in the

post-survey also helped answer research questions one and three by providing comparison

data from the OCN compared to other professional development opportunities and by

illuminating additional professional development needs. For this comparison data, I only

used participants who responded to both the pre- and post-surveys. I gave each participant

a number on the pre- and post-surveys, so I would be able to compare their responses

while keeping individual responses confidential.

For the non-participant survey, I created tables to identify the top reasons these

coaches did not join the OCN this year. I was then able to allow codes to emerge when

looking at the two open-ended responses to understand what would encourage them to

participate the following school year and what would prevent them from participating.

Focus Group

The focus group was conducted over Zoom and the recording was uploaded to

Otter.ai to translate the recording to a text transcript. After reviewing and editing the

transcript for errors, I uploaded the transcript to Taguette to conduct the qualitative

coding. Based on my knowledge of the literature surrounding instructional coaching HQPD

needs, I coded the transcript to better understand Lakota coaches' specific needs. A total of

24 codes were identified from this focus group. Table 2 includes each code and the number

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of times it was identified during the focus group below. A description of each code can be found in Appendix D.

Table 2.

Qualitative Codes from Focus Group

Topic	n	Topic	n
Outside of District	15	Collaboration	4
Coach Networking	12	Lack of Vision	4
Different Contexts and Perspectives	12	Network Space Positive	4
Informal Coach Learning	11	Who Coached	4
Admin Support	10	Coach Strategies	3
Network Space Negative	9	Community	3
"Unique" Role of Coach	7	Extended Connections	3
Group Members	7	Lack of Tech PD	3
Confidence in own knowledge	6	Applicable Topics	2
Job-Embedded PD	5	Facilitator Impact Positive	2
Role Clarification	5	Group Size	2
Timing	5	Internal Positive Feelings	2

OCN Facilitator Interview

The interview with the facilitator was conducted over Zoom and the recording was uploaded to Otter.ai to translate into a text transcript. After reviewing and editing the transcript for any errors, I uploaded the transcript to Taguette to conduct the qualitative coding. Questions from the interview were informed by the conceptual framework, and then I coded the transcript to compare it to the research on PLN. A total of 24 codes were identified from the interview. The codes used for the interview built on the codes from the focus group. Table 3 includes each code and the number of times it was identified below. A description of each code can be found in Appendix D.

Table 3.

Qualitative Codes from Facilitator Interview

Topic	n	Topic	n
Community	9	Network Space Negative	4
Outside of District	9	Unique Role of Coach	4
Group Members	6	Different Contexts	3
Member input	6	Group Size	2
Network Space Positive	6	Internal Positive Feelings	2
Different perspectives	5	Validation	2
Informal Coach Learning	5	Admin Support Positive	1
Applicable Topics	4	Coach Strategies	1
Attendance	4	Confidence in own knowledge	1
Coach Networking	4	Leadership	1
Extended Connections	4	Read Articles	1
Facilitator Impact Positive	4	Tech PD	1

Meeting Slides and Slack Workspace

Meeting slides were coded in two ways. First, I coded the slides that were a part of all three groups. Second, I coded the slides that were unique to each group to determine if there were any major differences in discussion topics. I used predetermined codes based on the conceptual framework and instructional coach literature to help answer questions one and three by determining if OCN was HQPD and what additional needs the coaches have. Table 4 includes each of the 11 codes used below.

Only 16 of the 28 participants joined the Slack workspace, which consisted of eight public channels that I had access to. Of those eight channels, two had no communication and three had only one or two posts from the facilitator. Two other channels only had one or two posts from other people. The most popular channel designed to share resources still only had eight total posts from only two members. Due to the lack of posts, there was

not a reason to code the Slack transcripts. However, the lack of use of Slack itself is still a

data point that informed the findings.

Table 4.

Qualitative Codes from Meeting Slides

Codes
Getting to Know each other/ Relationship Building
Context-specific Application
How to Coach Teachers (i.e. give feedback)
Leadership topics (general leadership, change management, etc.)
Build Relationships with Teachers
Professional Development (panning & delivering, adult learning)
Goals (connects to district or individual goals)
Technology specific (i.e. how to do something with a technology tool)
Content-Specific (i.e. literacy, math)
Defining Role & Responsibilities of a Coach
Working with Building & District Admin (i.e. getting their support)

Research Findings

Five major findings came from this quality improvement study. The first and third

findings answer research question one by addressing the notion that the OCN is HQPD and

understanding how it compares to previous professional development the coaches have

received. The second finding is in response to research question two regarding learning

gains and increased confidence as a result of participation in the OCN. The fourth finding

addresses space and logistical concerns related to the network that will be helpful in

informing the recommendations. Finally, the fifth finding addresses the third research

question regarding additional HQPD needs of Lakota's coaches beyond the OCN.

Finding 1: The OCN is HQPD

A series of questions in the post-survey asked respondents to rate participation in

the OCN as it relates to the seven HQPD traits identified in the literature review. These are

(1) focuses on specific content or a single topic, (2) takes place over time, (3) includes active

learning, (4) includes mentorship and coaching, (5) utilizes feedback and reflection

opportunities, (6) builds a community among participants, and (7) is job-embedded (Allen et

al., 2011; Booker, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone et al., 2016;

Drago-Severson, 2008; Frank et al., 2011; Garet et al., 2001; Roth et al., 2011; Yoon et al.,

2007). Of the five people who responded to the survey (over half of the eight participating

Lakota coaches), 80% - 100% agreed that the OCN met each of the seven traits of HQPD.

Only one person disagreed with two of the statements regarding active learning

experiences and on-the-job training. Figure 3 details the responses to each question below.

Figure 3.

Post-Survey Responses to the OCN as HQPD

Percent of respondents who selected "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" that participation in OCN met each of the following HQPD traits.
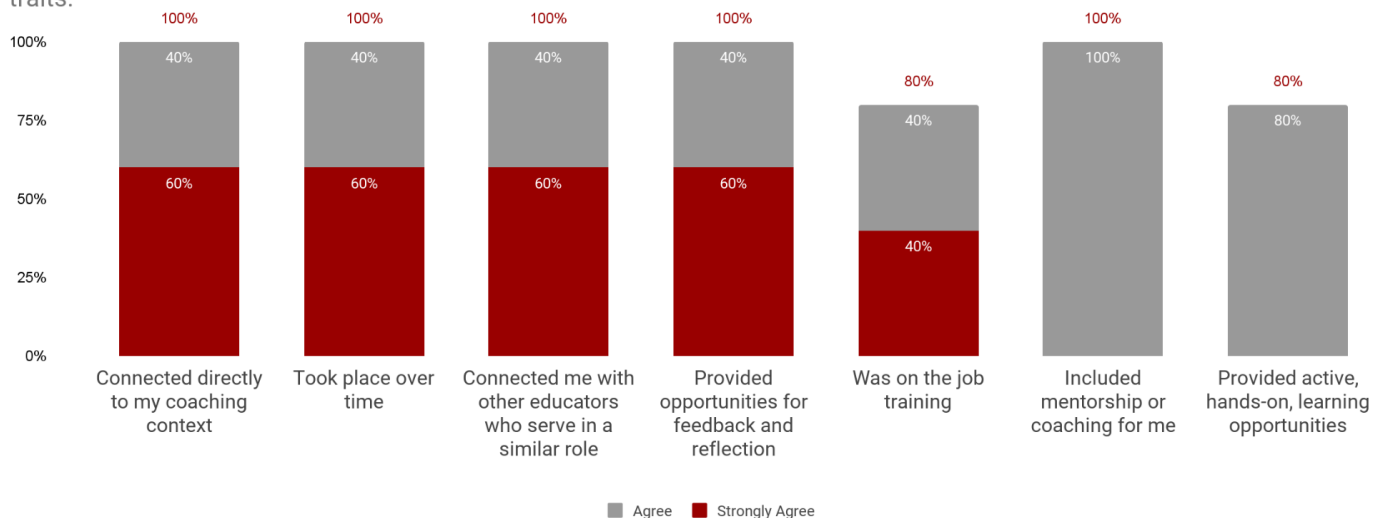
Research has identified that HQPD provides a minimum of 14 hours worth of training over time (Yoon et al., 2007). Each weekly OCN meeting lasted one hour, and while they only met seven to nine times (in other words, seven - nine hours), this was a result of the time of year the network started prior to summer break. If the network were to start at the beginning of the school year, it can be assumed that they would surpass this 14-hour threshold due to a school year spanning approximately 36 weeks.

Survey responses and the focus group show that Lakota coaches value connecting with other coaches over other forms of professional development. Evidence of this can be found in statements such as, "I can't remember anything, like, specific, I just remember the collaboration [with coaches]," when asked what the best professional development they have ever had as a coach has been. Participants overwhelmingly praised the OCN as providing them with HQPD. One participant commented, "The time is invaluable and [the] effort is so appreciated!" Another participant commented on the best part of the OCN being the value of connecting with other coaches by "hearing the experiences of others in the group and having access to the expertise of someone in a similar position to mine."

Finding 2: The OCN Contributed to Coaches' Learning Needs & Confidence

Participants responded to two questions on the post-survey to help answer research question two regarding learning gains and increased confidence. Of the five people who responded to the survey, 100% agreed that participation in the OCN contributed to their learning as a coach and 80% agreed that participation in the OCN contributed to their confidence in their abilities as a coach. Figure 4 below details the responses to each question.

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Figure 4.

Post-Survey Responses to Learning and Confidence

Percent of respondents who agreed that participation in OCN significantly contributed to their learning and confidence as a coach.
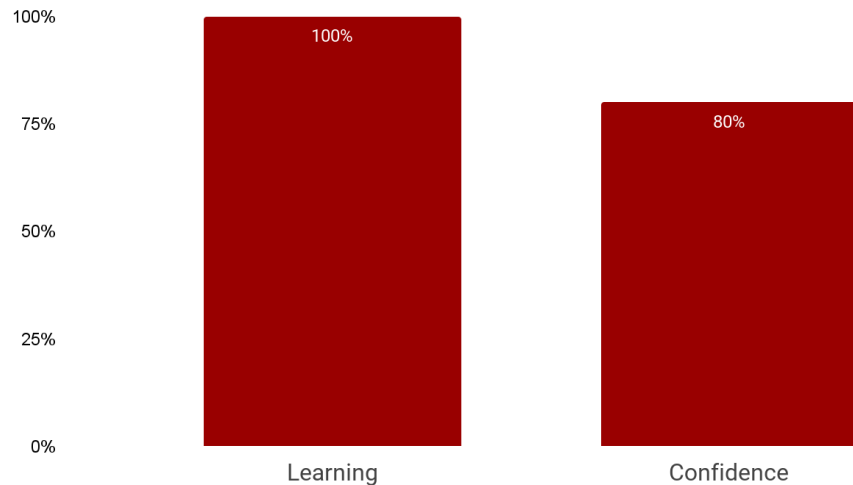
The individual coach-skill confidence questions did not see many changes between the pre- and post-surveys. Part of this could be due to the fact that respondents had a very high response rate of "agree" and "strongly agree" on the pre-survey to begin with. The seven participants who responded to the pre-survey worked at Lakota for an average of 13 years and had been in their current coaching role for an average of four years, with only one person being brand new to the role.

Of the questions that did see a change, "I am confident in my abilities as a coach to guide reflective conversations with teachers" saw the largest increase in confidence with four of the five respondents increasing their confidence by one (i.e., from "disagree" in the pre-survey to "agree" in the post-survey). Figure 5 below details the responses.

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Figure 5.

Pre- vs Post-Survey Responses to Confidence in Guiding Reflective Conversations

Responses to "I am confident in my abilities as a coach to guide reflective conversations with teachers" on the pre and post survey.

Number of Participants Who Selected Each Response

■ Agree to Agree   ■ Disagree to Agree   ■ Agree to Strongly Agree
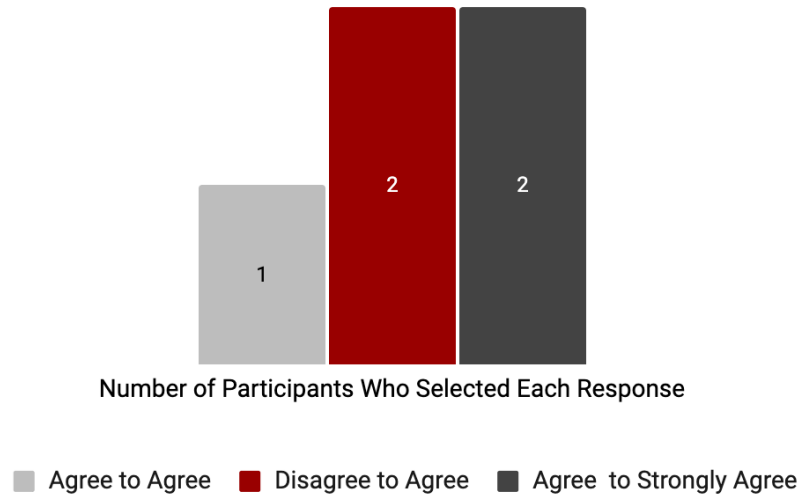
Based on the qualitative-coding of the meeting slides, *how to coach teachers* was the third most frequent topic of discussion that took place during the Monday group, and was the second most frequent topic for both the Tuesday and Wednesday groups. Many of these topics focused specifically on reflective conversations (how to guide teachers, how to motivate teachers, and how to support different personality types), which could have contributed to the increased confidence in guiding reflective conversations with teachers.

Finding 3: Coaches Prefer the OCN and Cross-District Collaboration to Previous Professional Development

Previous professional development provided to coaches spanned a number of topics in order to support the dynamic responsibilities placed on Lakota's coaches, such as

specific content professional development or leadership-focused activities brought from other network groups. Coaches seemed to like these leadership topics as evidenced in the response where 6 out of the 7 pre-survey respondents felt previous PD on leadership topics contributed to their learning as a coach. One coach reported that their best PD experience was led by the director of the team, Ms. Heidenreich, and "a lot of its more leadership- type things. Maybe not necessarily coaching, but of course you learn more about yourself and more about coaching as you learn those things too." Unfortunately, throughout the pandemic, coaches were provided with very little professional development because they were responsible for providing non-stop professional development to teachers to help support their transition to distance and hybrid learning environments.

Coaches also expressed how important collaborating with other coaches was to their previous learning experiences as a coach, yet how infrequently they were able to do this with coaches outside of Lakota. One coach mentioned an opportunity to collaborate with coaches from multiple districts as one of the most beneficial learning experiences for them as a coach, yet this gathering only took place five times per year for just a couple of hours at a time. It appears Lakota coaches crave more interactions with other coaches.

Coaches also expressed feeling like they are often responsible for teaching themselves different tools and strategies that they are expected to use with teachers. One coach said they "do a lot of just on the job training," and another coach elaborated, "You basically have to teach it to yourself, and then like, learn it at an expert level, so that you don't look like an idiot, like teaching this to the teachers, or a group of teachers."

When looking at survey responses of prior coach-specific professional development provided over the previous two years on the pre-survey compared to the OCN responses on the post-survey, the OCN exceeded, or was equal to, previous professional development in six out of seven of the HQPD traits. Responses from the two participants who did not complete the post-survey were removed from the pre-survey responses to previous professional development to allow for a more accurate comparison. Figure 6 below details the responses.

Figure 6.

Previous PD and the OCN: Comparison of Seven HQPD Traits

Percent of respondents who selected "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" that Previous Coach PD and OCN met seven HQPD traits.
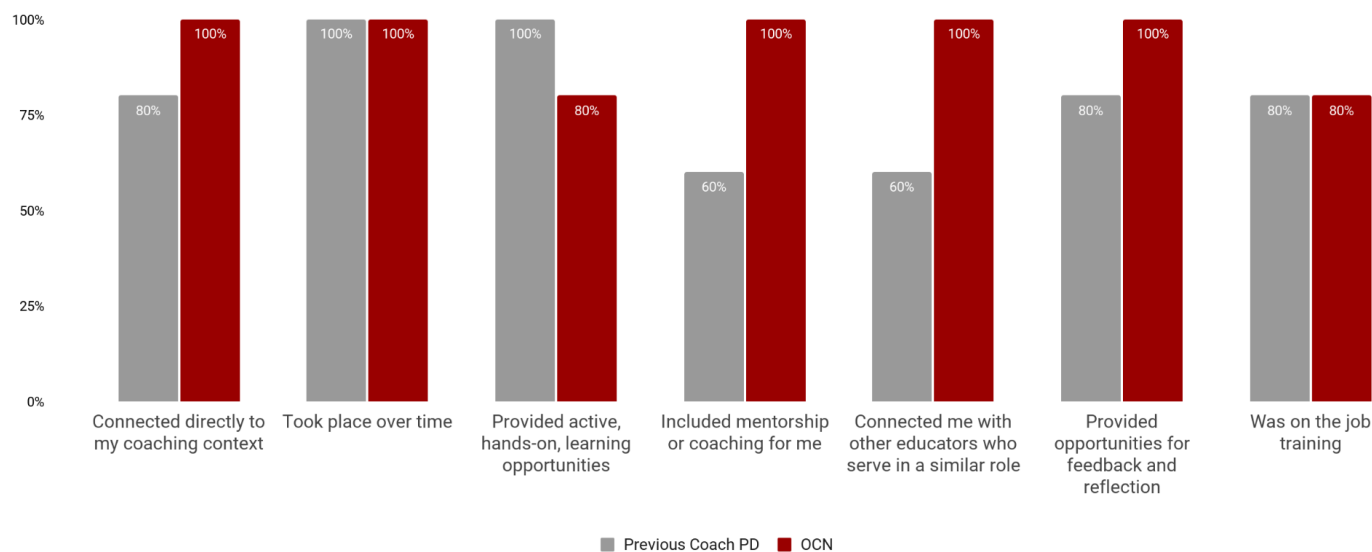
When comparing previous professional development experiences with post-survey responses of the five participants, 100% reported that participation in the OCN contributed to their learning as a coach, and 80% indicated that participation in the OCN contributed to their confidence in their overall abilities as a coach. The only topic of professional

50

development that contributed as much as or more than the OCN did to learning gains (100%) and increased confidence (80%) on the pre-survey was training on technology and digital tools, of which 100% of respondents said it contributed to both their learning gains and increased confidence as a coach. We can conclude that the OCN compares favorably to other professional development provided to Lakota's coaches in the past two years. Figures 7 and 8 below and Figure 4 above detail these responses.

Interestingly, participants responded that a number of previous professional development topics, such as social-emotional learning or leadership topics, on the pre-survey significantly contributed to their learning as a coach, yet disagreed when asked if the same topic contributed to confidence in their overall abilities as a coach. For example, 86% of respondents said that professional development on how to design and implement HQPD for teachers significantly contributed to their learning as a coach, but only 29% of respondents said this type of professional development contributed to their confidence as a coach. While this is not the focus of this study, it may be worth looking deeper into this discrepancy to better understand what contributes to coaches' learning versus their confidence, and which translates into better coaching of teachers.

Figure 7.

Previous PD that Contributed to Learning Gains

Percent of respondents who selected "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" to "the training I received [in the past two years] on the following topics significantly contributed to my learning as an instructional coach."
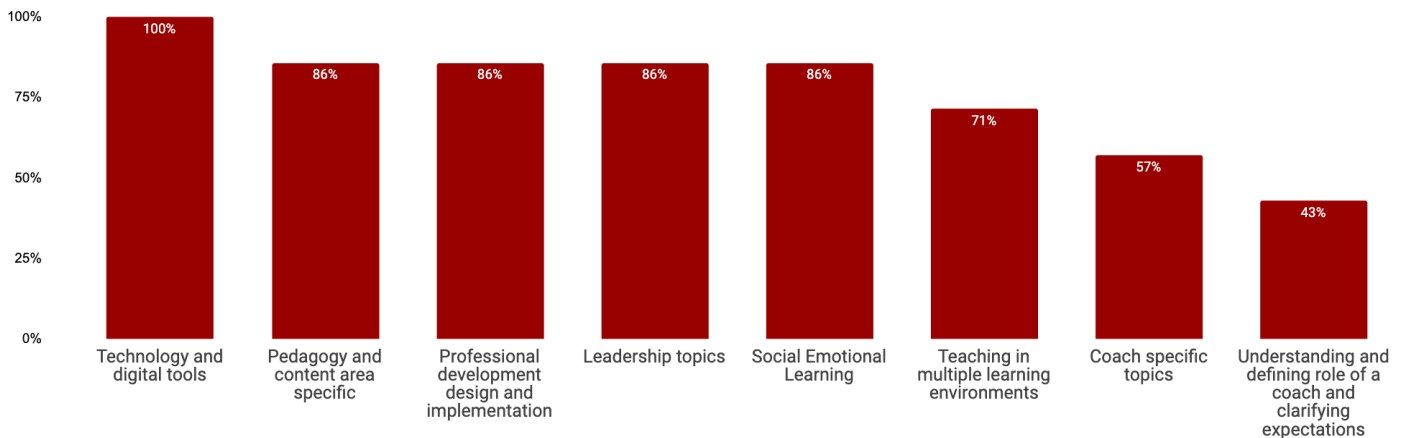
Figure 8.

Previous PD that Contributed to Increased Confidence

Percent of respondents that selected "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" to "the training I received [in the past two years] on the following topics significantly contributed to my confidence in my overall ability as an instructional coach."
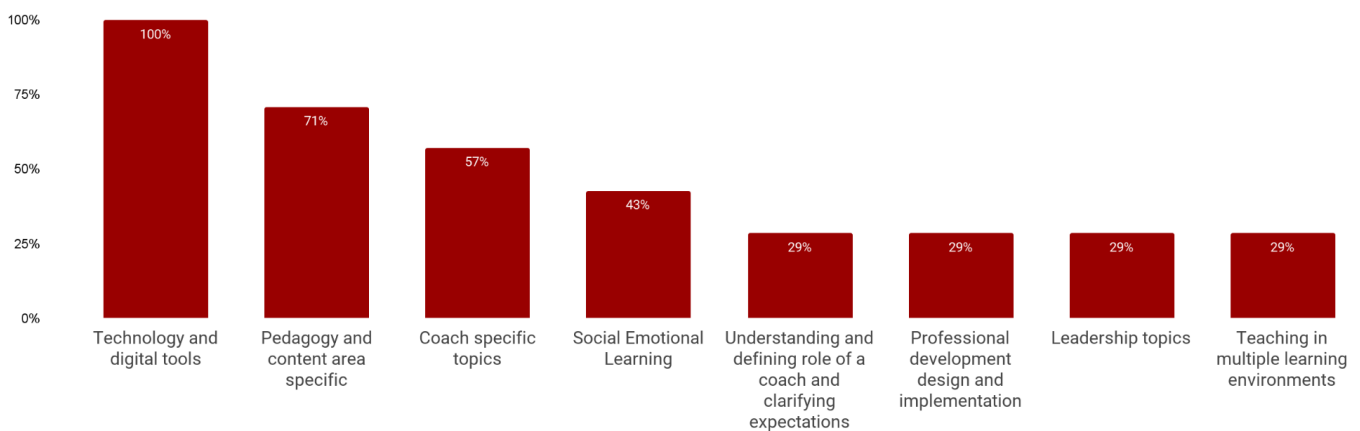
Additionally, when focus group participants were asked to describe the best

professional learning experience they have had as a coach, the opportunity to work with

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other coaches, particularly those from outside of Lakota, was brought up repeatedly. For

example, one coach described their best experience as

> *"listening to the other coaches talk about what they're doing in their building...*
> *it wasn't even like, I'm going to coach you to be a coach. It was like me*
> *observing coaches or me just sitting and listening to them talking about 'I tried*
> *to do this PD, or I tried this strategy with this person'... And so it was very*
> *informal on the fly. And I think that that sticks out to me, because [it isn't] what*
> *I would design for myself, do you know what I mean? Like if I was going to like,*
> *okay, here's this conference, right? I knew as a teacher at this conference, I can*
> *go to this and this and this and immediately implement it. I wouldn't know that*
> *as a coach, which I know sounds stupid. But like, when you're an instructional*
> *coach, there's so much baptism by fire."*

Other coaches went on to add statements such as, "networking with a lot of new coaches,

which was helpful," and "I can't remember anything, like, specific, I just remember the

collaboration [with coaches]." Throughout the focus group discussion, references to the

importance of coach-to-coach networking were made 12 times, which was the second most

frequently mentioned topic. The most mentioned concept was the benefit of working with

coaches outside of Lakota, which was referenced 15 times during the 45-minute focus

group. Additionally, the importance of hearing from different contexts (i.e., grade levels or

content areas) or different perspectives and ideas was referenced another 12 times.

Statements like, "It's always energizing to talk to people from different school districts,"

were repeatedly expressed in the focus group and in survey responses. Lakota's coaches

value network experiences specifically with other coaches, and, in particular, the

opportunity to network with coaches outside of the district. The OCN explicitly provides

Lakota's coaches with the opportunity to network with other coaches outside of the district,

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which serves as further proof that the OCN compares favorably to other professional

development provided to Team Inspire.

Finding 4: Additional Districts Need to Join the OCN and Other Improvements for the

Future

Due to the size of the overall group, the number of participating Lakota coaches,

and the time of year the network began, Lakota's coaches still dominated the small groups.

Evidence of this can be found in post-survey responses. Participants referenced wanting a

"more diverse group of educators. In other words, more districts participating," or feeling

"like we needed more people- not everyone was consistent about attending" and lastly,

wondering if "I would have learned more hearing from more districts." Knowing how

valuable these cross-district coach networking opportunities are to Lakota coaches, it will

be important to ensure the OCN regularly provides this experience.

Another major finding regarding the space in which the network is conducted was

that the Slack went practically unused. Only 16 network participants (57%) even joined the

Slack workspace, and the very few posts that were made were primarily by the facilitator

and one or two other people. It may be important to note that the most utilized channel

was the "professional resources" channel, where participants shared and solicited materials

from one another. In the facilitator interview, Ms. Simpson shared that Lakota ended up

being unable to unblock Slack for their coaches at school. Though there is an application to

download on a smartphone, the blocked site at school likely contributed to the eight Lakota

coaches' abandoning the platform.

The Wednesday group seemed to be the most active group during synchronous

meetings. Evidence of this can be found in the qualitative coding of the meeting slides with

the Wednesday group having a total of 104 coded topics, compared to the Tuesday group

with 84 coded topics and the Monday group with 67 coded topics. These numbers combine

the discussion topics that took place across all groups, as well as the individual topics

added by group members. Furthermore, the Wednesday group is the only group to have

discussed all pre-determined topic codes outside of the pre-planned activities. It is worth

noting that the OCN Facilitator commented in the interview that the Wednesday group had

the most consistent attendance, likely due to spring events such as testing that may have

prevented people from joining earlier in the week. These codes can be found in Table 5

below. The column "all" includes the predetermined meeting slide topics that were

discussed in all three groups. Each individual day column (i.e., "Monday")

Table 5.

Meeting Slide Code Count by Group

Codes	All	Monday	Monday Total	Tuesday	Tuesday Total	Wednesday	Wednesday Total
Getting to Know each other/ Relationship Building	7	16	23	26	33	35	42
Context-specific Application	7	3	10	1	8	1	8
How to Coach Teachers (i.e. give feedback)	6	3	9	7	13	9	15
Leadership topics (general leadership, change management, etc.)	3	0	3	1	4	3	6
Build Relationships with Teachers	2	3	5	3	5	6	8
Professional Development (panning & delivering, adult learning)	2	7	9	7	9	5	7
Goals (connects to district or individual goals)	1	1	2	0	1	1	2
Technology specific (i.e. how to do something with a technology tool)	0	2	2	4	4	9	9
Content-Specific (i.e. literacy, math)	0	4	4	6	6	3	3
Defining Role & Responsibilities of a Coach	0	0	0	1	1	2	2
Working with Building & District Admin (i.e. getting their support)	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Total	28	39	67	56	84	76	104

include the topics that were added by members of that particular group. The day total columns (i.e., "Monday Total") includes the combined total of the preplanned meeting topics and the topics added by individual group members.

Lastly, the non-participating coaches survey showed that these coaches would like the opportunity to participate if their schedule allows because they value connections with other coaches over other PD. Of the four out of nine coaches who responded, the top reasons for not participating this year were scheduling conflicts (75%) and a lack of clear expectations for network involvement (75%). This question allowed respondents to write in an additional response to this question. One person wrote, "I didn't know about this network or its requirements," so I added their response to the "I did not understand the expectations" total. Another person wrote in "this year has been a year," likely in response to the impact COVID-19 had on education. This last write-in response is not included in the summary of responses. Table 6 details the responses below. Additional open-ended responses further expanded upon the notion that these coaches would like to participate if it fits their schedule. One coach noted, "I see the value in being part of a larger PLN with coaches outside of Lakota." Another coach wrote, "I always want to be learning and growing my practice with other coaches in a relatively new profession. I strongly value my own personal PD and this is one way I achieve it."

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Table 6.

Non-Participant Survey Responses to Reasons for Not Participating

Please select all of the reasons that led to your decision not to participate in the Ohio Virtual Coach Network this year.	% of Respondents	n
Scheduling conflicts- I had overlapping appointments during the meetings	75%	3
I did not understand the expectations	75%	3
I did not think it would be valuable	25%	1
Too much of a time commitment	0%	0
I already have a valuable professional network	0%	0
I wanted to participate, but the group had reached capacity	0%	0

Finding 5: Additional Technology and Administrator-Focused PD are Needed

It is important to note that the second focus group was going to heavily inform the third and final research question related to this finding. Since I was unable to conduct the final focus group, I am using limited information from the surveys, the first focus group, the facilitator interview, and the literature. From the limited data collection, I was able to discern two major areas of interest for additional professional development.

First, it appears that technology-specific professional development opportunities are useful to Lakota's coaches. When asked about different professional learning topics that benefitted coaches on the pre-survey, 100% said that technology and digital tools training significantly contributed to their learning and confidence as a coach. No other topic, such as pedagogy or content, leadership skills, or even coach-specific topics were favored as highly as the previous technology and digital tools trainings. Furthermore, a lack of technology-focused professional development opportunities was mentioned three times in

the focus group. For example, one coach noted, "So our role is very, curriculum and tech…

but when a new tech tool comes out, I mean, basically, every single time I have to teach

myself. We never get any tech PD, like ever." As previously mentioned, a coach also said,

"You basically have to teach it to yourself, and then like, learn it at an expert level, so that

you don't look like an idiot, like teaching this to the teachers, or a group of teachers." This

may be an area worth exploring for additional ongoing professional development

opportunities for Lakota's coaches.

Secondly, research shows that when administrators work with the coach to align

coaching efforts to school initiatives, it contributes to the success of the coaching program

(Gallucci et al., 2010; Hannan & Russell, 2020; Russell et al., 2020). Based on coding of the

meeting slides, helping coaches work with building administration to leverage the impact of

coaches was not a planned activity for all groups, and only the Wednesday group discussed

this. Furthermore, Lakota coaches mentioned a lack of vision and support from building

administrators. One coach commented on struggling to help teachers because a building

"principal act[s] like I don't exist, and so I have to get in with the teachers through them.

And I don't get any help in that respect. So I think it really does help when you have your

administrative support." Another coach noted, "Maybe we don't have like the vision of the

district right now, because of COVID… but like, I feel like when we have a defined vision,

and a defined role, you know, we can coach better." This could be another option to

explore: working with coaches to build relationships with administrators, and inversely,

working with building administrators to make sure they fully understand how to leverage

their instructional coaches. Lakota coaches would benefit from having a defined vision for their work with teachers that is communicated across the district.

Recommendations

The five findings laid the foundation of four recommendations for Lakota related to the OCN and additional professional development needs. The first recommendation to continue the OCN was informed by findings one, two, and three which showed that the OCN was HQPD that contributed to coach learning and confidence in a format that coaches preferred. The second recommendation to extend the network to include additional districts was informed by finding three and by the fact that coaches value cross-district collaboration with coaches. They also felt they needed additional voices in the OCN. The third recommendation provides network logistic and structural suggestions based on findings three and four. The final recommendation around additional professional development needs draws on finding five.

Recommendation 1: Continue the OCN in the Fall of 2021-22 on a Bi-weekly Basis

Provided that the OCN is HQPD that leads to increased learning gains and increased confidence for coaches, paired with the fact that Lakota coaches find networking with other coaches outside of Lakota so valuable, Lakota should continue to facilitate the OCN and encourage their coaches to participate in the network. Building trust among network participants is paramount to establishing meaningful interactions among those very participants (Trust & Prestridge, 2021); therefore, it will be critical for network participants to regularly attend meetings. With weekly meetings being a large time commitment

throughout the school year and rich network discussions being so dependent on

attendance of various members, Lakota should consider changing the frequency to a

bi-weekly meeting schedule. Ideally, this may encourage additional coaches to join since it

is half the time commitment, making it more feasible for participants to attend regularly.

Moving to a monthly schedule may be too infrequent to address more timely concerns of

participants or to establish relationships in a timely manner. Bi-weekly meetings would also

alleviate time constraint pressure by 50% if Ms. Simpson continues to facilitate the

meetings. In the future, network facilitators may want to consider asking participants to

sign an attendance agreement when they sign up to join the network, acknowledging that

attendance is important to building meaningful connections. This may encourage

participants to regularly attend meetings throughout the year.

Lakota leadership should continue to allow participation in the OCN to be voluntary

to ensure only those coaches who are most interested in forming connections with other

participants are present. Requiring resistant coaches to join the network may hurt some of

the discussions. As one coach mentioned in the focus group, "a person in the group can

change the way I behave." This supports research that the people participating are one of

the five main factors that shape the overall network experience for participants (Krutka et

al., 2017; Trust & Prestridge, 2021). While participation in this specific network should

remain optional, Lakota leadership may consider setting and clarifying expectations around

the amount of time members of Team Inspire should dedicate to their own coach learning

on a weekly or monthly basis. By setting an expectation that coach learning should be a

prioritized responsibility, more coaches may feel they could participate since a lack of time

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was the main reason coaches did not participate in the first year of the OCN. If a particular

individual does not feel they would benefit from participating in the OCN, they will be able

to choose how they learn best and dedicate the same amount of time to their own learning

as those coaches who choose to participate in the OCN. Lastly, PLN that are guided in a

direction based on personal goals of participants are most beneficial in helping participants

achieve those goals (Haas et al., 2020). Lakota may consider engaging in goal-setting

conversations with coaches to help them determine if the OCN is a good fit for their

individual goals.

Recommendation 2: Extend Network to Include Additional Districts, Including Those

Outside of Ohio

When asked how the OCN could improve, the following statement was a common

thread in post-survey responses: the OCN needs, "a more diverse group of educators. In

other words, more districts participating." This was further reinforced by a comment made

in the focus group, "I do feel like since Lakota is so innovative, and like, I mean, we're just

trying to do a lot of things, it's nice to hear from other people in other districts. But it was

so funny because online on one day, it was three Lakota people and then two other people.

It was very Lakota-ish." Since the data shows that Lakota coaches value inter-district

collaboration with other coaches, it will be crucial that the OCN provide those outside

perspectives for Lakota coaches to continue to gain professional growth.

With limited data on the number of coaches in Ohio, Lakota coaches may benefit

from inviting coaches outside of Ohio to provide the outside perspective Lakota coaches

seek. Additionally, inviting districts outside of Ohio may open the door to hearing

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perspectives from more innovative districts that Lakota finds more similar to their own approach. During the interview, Ms. Simpson commented on the benefit of having all the coaches in the network from Ohio stating, "I think there's some benefit to us all teaching the same standards and having some commonalities in the way that like, you know, our school funding is and our districts run." She was also optimistic about the new perspectives coaches outside of Ohio could provide. While it is true that state-specific nuances can foster or prohibit certain initiatives taking place, good coaching should transcend state-specific standards. The benefit to these outside perspectives outweigh the state-specific knowledge.

Recommendation 3: Avoid Monday Meetings & Include Additional Pre-Planned Discussion Topics

While it is noted that the schedule for the OCN groups was based on availability in year one, data revealed that the Wednesday group had the most consistent attendance. Ms. Simpson commented during the interview that she assumed this could be attributed to Monday holidays when school is closed and to state-testing troubleshooting issues that are likely solved by mid-week. Knowing this, the network may benefit if meeting days span Wednesday through Friday instead of Monday through Wednesday. At the very least, avoiding any meetings on a Monday will prevent the cancellation of meetings that fall on a Monday holiday.

Additionally, pre-planned synchronous discussion topics should focus on coach needs since coaching-specific professional development is hard to come by. Two topics that were not pre-planned discussions in the first year of the OCN were 1) defining the role

and responsibilities of a coach and 2) working with building and district administration (i.e.,

getting their support). These topics go hand-in-hand with one another and are really

important to continuously review with coaches. Research shows the importance of having a

meaningful working relationship with district and building administration in order to

maximize the impact of instructional coaches (Gallucci et al., 2010; Hannan & Russell, 2020;

Russell et al., 2020; Shanklin, 2007), and how critical it is to protect the coaches' time to

work one-on-one with teachers (Russell et al., 2020; Shanklin, 2007). If an individual coach

or their reporting supervisor does not clearly understand what a coach should and should

not do, their time will likely be spent doing more administrative tasks that have less of an

impact on teacher growth and student outcomes (Russell et al., 2020). This makes

discussion topics related to helping coaches gain support and clarify their role to

administrators critically important for the OCN to best support coaches within the network.

Finally, the space(s) in which network interactions take place and the tools that are

used to facilitate those interactions greatly influence the experience for participants (Haas

et al., 2020; Krutka et al., 2017; Trust et al., 2018). While the OCN participants did not utilize

the Slack workspace for asynchronous communication, research shows that having tools to

support synchronous and asynchronous methods of communication and to share

resources provides a more robust PLN experience to educators (Krutka et al., 2017; Trust et

al., 2018). It would be worthwhile to incorporate Slack, or another similar tool, for

asynchronous communication. One participant replied in an open-ended comment on the

post-survey that they would have liked a "summary of what was discussed and quick links,"

and another person commented that they would like the "agenda sent out beforehand."

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Both of these resources could be communicated through an asynchronous platform. This could also serve as a way to connect small groups with the larger group and as a way to have threaded discussions around content-specific coaching, i.e., literacy or math, or specific district-adopted tools, i.e., a learning management system (LMS) such as Schoology or Canvas. Putnam and Borko (2000) suggest establishing norms with the use of synchronous and asynchronous tools to clarify how participants should interact with one another. Norms should be established for Slack (or a similar communication tool) to encourage participants to utilize it for things like extending synchronous meeting conversations, connecting with other coaches outside of the small group, and in-the-moment coach support.

Recommendation 4: Implement Technology and Shadowing PD for Coaches; Leverage Coaches PD for Administrators

Technology-specific training was received very positively by coaches, and was the only previous professional development that 100% of respondents to the pre-survey felt had significantly contributed to both their learning and confidence as a coach. The need for more technology-specific training was brought up three times in the focus group where participants felt that they "basically had to do a crash course ourselves to help figure you know, like, learn it, troubleshoot all the things, practice with our practice students and all that so that we can really speak to it in a, you know, an educated way to our teachers." With so many coaches on the team, Team Inspire could divide coaches into sub-committees who were responsible for keeping track of and sharing out to all coaches any major updates or changes. For example, two to three coaches could be in charge of the district LMS Canvas,

another three to four coaches could be in charge of Google Workspace for Education updates, and so on. With technology platforms changing so rapidly, it would benefit Lakota coaches to provide ongoing learning opportunities for commonly used district technology.

It is clear that Lakota's coaches find informal coach learning most beneficial as evidenced in a number of comments made in the focus group and in open-ended questions on the surveys. One coach commented that they wanted more "in person connection. I just love doing things in person" as a way to improve the network experience. Lave and Wenger (1991) point out the importance of observing others and being observed to solidify learning experiences within a CoP. It could benefit coaches to job shadow other coaches, either within the district or with other coaches from the network. As one coach in the focus group said regarding the best professional development experience they have had, "It was like me observing coaches, or me like just sitting and listening to them..." By shadowing other coaches in their daily work, it would allow each individual observer to pick up on nuances and strategies that the observed coach does yet does not even think about sharing with other coaches.

Finally, Lakota would be able to maximize the impact their instructional coaches have across the district if a clear vision and expectations of Team Inspire were communicated to all district and building administrators who support teachers and instruction. One coach commented during the focus group that, "the one thing I've seen lacking big time this year, is that vision and defined goal from the district level." Other coaches commented on the impact building principals have on the way they are (or are not) utilized by teachers. Research shows us that coaching is most effective when district and

building leaders work together with the coach(es) to align their efforts to school goals and

encourage teachers to work with the coach (Gallucci et al., 2010; Russell et al., 2020;

Shanklin, 2007; Stein et al., 2021), and that district leaders need to provide more guidance,

resources, and time for coaches to support teachers, especially when coaching teachers on

the use of instructional technology (Hashim, 2020). As evidenced in coaches' comments,

not all Lakota principals are engaging in this important work with their designated coach.

Providing district and building administrators with training on how to leverage their

instructional coach to support teachers and achieve building goals would have an

astounding impact on instruction across the district.

Discussion and Conclusion

The COVID-19 global pandemic redefined nearly every industry and required

creative solutions to maintain operations, including the K-12 education sector. Carl Weick's

(1993) research on the Mann Gulch disaster taught us that sometimes we need to "drop

our tools" and "light an escape fire" to survive a crisis. In other words, educators had to

forget the *old* way of delivering instruction as they reinvented education and came up with

new innovative ways of teaching and caring for students. Instructional coaches were an

important piece of the support puzzle for teachers prior to COVID-19, and became even

more crucial in supporting educators throughout the pandemic. However, the more

pressure that was placed on coaches to support teachers, the more isolated and

overwhelmed coaches felt to provide the level of support that was required. It was all

hands on deck to support teachers, but very little was known about how to support

coaches with their own growth and development.

Lakota Local Schools took this challenge head on to better understand and support

their own Team Inspire made up of 17 instructional coaches. Team Inspire leadership

recognized how isolated their coaches felt due to the fact that, as a result of the pandemic,

they had to forgo weekly team meetings that had traditionally focused on providing their

coaches with an opportunity to address specific coaching-related issues and to engage in

professional learning directly related to coaching. One of the innovations that rose through

the metaphorical ashes the pandemic left behind, was a new sense of comfortability with

virtual gatherings. Team Inspire leadership decided to take advantage of this new normal,

and they formed a virtual network made up of 28 instructional coaches across the state of

Ohio. Participation in the OCN was an option for Lakota coaches, eight of whom decided to

take advantage of the opportunity to network with other coaches one hour per week. The

assistant director of Team Inspire lead and facilitated all network meetings that spanned

three days per week. With so many coaches from Lakota participating in the OCN, Lakota

leadership wanted to understand to what extent a professional network provided HQPD to

their coaches, how it compared previous coach professional development provided to the

team, and if coaches reported increased confidence and learning gains as a result of their

participation in the OCN, all to decide if continued long-term participation in the network

was worth it. And lastly, Lakota leadership wanted to better understand additional

professional learning needs of their coaches to continue to provide the necessary growth

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and learning opportunities to the team that supports all 2,000 educators across their entire

district.

Through this mixed-methods quality improvement study, seven methods of data

were collected to inform the findings and recommendations: a pre- and post-survey of

network participants, a survey of non-network participants, a focus group with participants,

an interview with the network facilitator, and coding of the meeting slides and Slack

channel, which led to five major findings. In summary, Lakota should continue participation

in the OCN, or similar coach network, because participation proved to be HQPD for the

participating coaches. Participating coaches did report learning gains and increased

confidence as a coach, and in particular, participation in the OCN contributed to greater

learning gains and increased confidence when compared to almost all forms of previous

professional development that was provided up to two-years prior to the 2020-2021 school

year. Additionally, coaches found tremendous value in networking with other coaches, in

particular in hearing from coaches outside of Lakota to help them bring back new, fresh

ideas. In regards to improving the OCN in the future, Lakota coaches would like additional

districts to join, non-participating coaches would participate if they have the time,

Wednesday or later was best for scheduling, and the Slack was underutilized for

asynchronous communication. And finally, technology-specific training was identified as an

area for future coach professional learning, as was the need for building administrators to

fully understand and support the work of Team Inspire across all buildings. It is my hope

that the four recommendations informed by these findings will provide a path forward for

Lakota leadership to continue to improve and provide the coaches with the same high

quality support the coaches provide teachers within the district.

It is important to note limitations of this study. The timing of the study presented

some challenges in terms of summer break and back-to-school season. This prevented a

second focus group from taking place with network participants that could have

illuminated more in-depth insights to the impact the network had on participants as well as

to future professional learning needs of the coaches. Additionally, the timing of the study

prevented long-term data collection to analyze growth over time, such as the course of an

entire school year. Another limitation to this study was the self-rating from each coach and

a lack of teacher-impact data. Future studies may want to look at evaluating teacher

perceptions of the coach prior to and after any coach professional development to

understand the impact that coach learning has in supporting teachers. While limitations

exist in any research, the information discovered in this study provide a solid working

foundation for understanding the benefits of a coach network for participants and the

HQPD needs of coaches at Lakota.

In conclusion, coaches serve a very unique role within school systems, and their

professional development needs should be considered just as unique as the role in which

they serve. A professional network dedicated to instructional coaches that intentionally

addresses the specific needs of a coach, and connects coaches with others outside of their

own district, may be one of the best forms of HQPD for coaches. One final quote captured

during the focus group shares just how important an inter-district coach network is to the

confidence and professional learning of participating coaches.

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"You get self-conscious about not doing the job right. Like, am I even, you

know, am I important? Am I doing what I'm supposed to be doing by helping

people? And then you hear from other districts like, 'oh, okay.' Then you

know they're experiencing the same things that I'm experiencing. So, it kind

of validates you, and then from there, you can talk about... how can we make

this better?"

As coaches everywhere seek out professional development for their role, I hope this

research will convey the positive experience that Lakota coaches saw in a professional

coach network, and it will encourage coaches to form meaningful professional connections

that will support their growth and development as a coach and instructional leader in both

the short and long term.

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Appendices

A: Pre-Survey

Pre-Survey: Ohio Virtual Coach Network

This confidential survey will inform Katie Ritter in her Ed.D. research at Vanderbilt University. This study will seek to understand the extent in which a professional network for instructional coaches provides high quality professional development to participants.

Survey results are completely confidential between the respondent, Katie, and Katie's faculty advisor at Vanderbilt University. Individual responses will not be shared with Lakota, nor will they be reported in the findings. Names are only indicated to be able to compare before and after data.

* Required

1. First and Last Name *

   _____

2. How many years will you have been employed at Lakota by the end of the current school year? *

   _____

3. How many years will you have been an instructional coach at the end of the current school year? *
   This should include both at Lakota and anywhere else you may have held the position.

   _____

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4. I am confident in my abilities as a coach to... *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Clarify my role for myself and others	◯	◯	◯	◯
Understand the expectations of the varying responsibilities within my role	◯	◯	◯	◯
Build relationships with all educators I support	◯	◯	◯	◯
Work one on one with teachers to support their individual needs	◯	◯	◯	◯
Schedule regular meetings with teachers (every couple of weeks) to work on improving their skills over time	◯	◯	◯	◯
Allow teachers to direct our sessions based on their needs	◯	◯	◯	◯

5. I am confident in my abilities as a coach to... *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Model skills for teachers	◯	◯	◯	◯
Provide constructive, positive feedback to teachers	◯	◯	◯	◯
Guide reflective conversations with teachers	◯	◯	◯	◯
Collect and analyze feedback and data related to my effectiveness as a coach	◯	◯	◯	◯
Discuss overall feedback and data related to my coaching with administrators	◯	◯	◯	◯
Align my work as a coach to building and district goals	◯	◯	◯	◯

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6. I am confident in my abilities as a coach to… *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Prepare meaningful and engaging professional development	○	○	○	○
Lead and deliver meaningful and engaging professional development	○	○	○	○
Seek out my own professional learning opportunities	○	○	○	○

7. Overall, how confident do you feel in your ability as an instructional coach to support all educators that you are responsible for supporting? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not confident at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Extremely confident

8. How would you rate your overall job satisfaction as an instructional coach? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	N/A- This is my first year as a coach
Last school year	○	○	○	○	○
The current 20-21 school year	○	○	○	○	○

9. If your job satisfaction increased or decreased from last school year to this school year, please select all the reasons that contributed to this change.

Check all that apply.

- ☐ My job satisfaction did not change
- ☐ Changes in job responsibilities related to COVID
- ☐ Changes in job responsibilities unrelated to COVID
- ☐ Additional experience within the role

Other: ☐ _____

10. Approximately how many hours of training have you received on the following topics in the past two years? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	None	1 - 5 hours	6 - 10 hours	11 - 20 hours	21 - 40 hours	More than 40 hours
Pedagogy related to a specific content area (i.e. teaching literacy or math skills)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Technology and digital tools (i.e. Google Slides in the classroom, Desmos for math, digital assessment tools)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Coach specific topics (i.e. how to implement coaching cycles, building relationships with teachers, working with reluctant teachers, working with adult learners)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Understanding and defining your role as a coach and clarifying expectations	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Professional development design and implementation (i.e. developing a presentation for a PD day, presenting to teachers)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Leadership topics (i.e. building/district vision and goal setting, leading people through change, culture change)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Social Emotional Learning (i.e. self-care, supporting students SEL needs)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Teaching in multiple learning environments (i.e. delivering instruction in face to face vs hybrid vs virtual environments, engaging virtual learners)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Other	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

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11. **The training I received on the following topics significantly contributed to my learning as an instructional coach.** *

Please allow your responses to reflect training you have received over the past two years.

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	I did not receive training
Pedagogy related to a specific content area (i.e. teaching literacy or math skills)	○	○	○	○	○
Technology and digital tools (i.e. Google Slides in the classroom, Desmos for math, digital assessment tools)	○	○	○	○	○
Coach specific topics (i.e. how to implement coaching cycles, building relationships with teachers, working with reluctant teachers, working with adult learners)	○	○	○	○	○
Understanding and defining your role as a coach and clarifying expectations	○	○	○	○	○
Professional development design and implementation (i.e. developing a presentation for a PD day, presenting to teachers)	○	○	○	○	○
Leadership topics (i.e. building/district vision and goal setting, leading people through change, culture change)	○	○	○	○	○
Social Emotional Learning (i.e. self-care, supporting students SEL needs)	○	○	○	○	○
Teaching in multiple learning environments (i.e. delivering instruction in face to face vs hybrid vs virtual environments, engaging virtual learners)	○	○	○	○	○
Other	○	○	○	○	○

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12. **The training I received on the following topics significantly contributed to my confidence in my overall ability as an instructional coach.** *

Please allow your responses to reflect training you have received over the past two years.

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	I did not receive training
Pedagogy related to a specific content area (i.e. teaching literacy or math skills)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Technology and digital tools (i.e. Google Slides in the classroom, Desmos for math, digital assessment tools)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Coach specific topics (i.e. how to implement coaching cycles, building relationships with teachers, working with reluctant teachers, working with adult learners)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Understanding and defining your role as a coach and clarifying expectations	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Professional development design and implementation (i.e. developing a presentation for a PD day, presenting to teachers)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Leadership topics (i.e. building/district vision and goal setting, leading people through change, culture change)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Social Emotional Learning (i.e. self-care, supporting students SEL needs)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Teaching in multiple learning environments (i.e. delivering instruction in face to face vs hybrid vs virtual environments, engaging virtual learners)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Other	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

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13. The training I received specific to instructional coaching over the past two years... *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	I did not receive training
Connected directly to my coaching context	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Took place over time, or more than one sitting	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Provided active, hands-on, learning opportunities	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Included mentorship or coaching for me	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Connected me with other educators who serve in a similar role	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Provided opportunities for feedback and reflection	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Was on the job training	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

14. What have you found most helpful to your role as an instructional coach from training you have received over the past two years? *

15. What has been missing from training you have received over the past two years to support your role as an instructional coach? *

16. Do you currently have a Professional Learning Network (PLN) made up of other instructional coaches? *

Mark only one oval.

◯ No

◯ Yes; it is primarily other Lakota coaches   *Skip to question 17*

◯ Yes; it includes primarily coaches outside of Lakota   *Skip to question 17*

◯ Yes; it includes both coaches from Lakota and outside of Lakota equally
Skip to question 17

17. **Please list your current Professional Learning Networks (PLN) ***

i.e. ISTE's Edtech Coaches PLN, Twitter, etc.

18. **Please select the average amount of time you engage with your PLN(s) in each of the following spaces. ***

Mark only one oval per row.

	I never engage with my PLN(s) this way	Less than one hour per month	1-5 hours per month	6-10 hours per month	More than 10 hours per month
Mostly online in asynchronous discussions- i.e. through social media, blogs, and online forums	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Mostly online in synchronous discussions- i.e. through social media, live Twitter chats, and virtual meetings	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Mostly face to face in synchronous discussions- i.e. through in person meetings, conferences, and workshops	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

19. **Why do you engage with your current PLN(s)? ***

Select all that apply.

Check all that apply.

☐ Find and share professional knowledge
☐ Overcome feelings of isolation
☐ Receive emotional support
☐ Seek out help with a current problem I am facing
☐ Connect with people beyond Lakota
Other: ☐ _____

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20. How do you engage with your current PLN(s)? *

Select all that apply.

Check all that apply.

☐ Absentee- I often forget about my PLN(s) and do not typically engage much at all

☐ Observer- I mostly listen and read what others are saying or posting without engaging in discussion

☐ Responder- I will respond to questions that are posed and offer advice and experience

☐ Initiator- I will initiate conversation and pose questions of my own to the group

☐ Applier- I frequently apply ideas to my work that are shared or I come up with as a result of PLN discussions

21. Why do you want to participate in the new Ohio Virtual Coach Network? *

Select all that apply.

Check all that apply.

☐ Find and share professional knowledge

☐ Overcome feelings of isolation

☐ Receive emotional support

☐ Seek out help with a current problem I am facing

☐ Connect with people beyond Lakota

Other: ☐ _____

B: Post-Survey

Post-Survey: Ohio Virtual Coach Network

This confidential survey will inform Katie Ritter in her Ed.D. research at Vanderbilt University. This study will seek to understand the extent in which a professional network for instructional coaches provides high quality professional development to participants.

Survey results are completely confidential between the respondent, Katie, and Katie's faculty advisor at Vanderbilt University. Individual responses will not be shared with Lakota, nor will they be reported in the findings. Names are only indicated to be able to compare before and after data.

* Required

1. First and Last Name *

_____

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2. I am confident in my abilities as a coach to... *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Clarify my role for myself and others	◯	◯	◯	◯
Understand the expectations of the varying responsibilities within my role	◯	◯	◯	◯
Build relationships with all educators I support	◯	◯	◯	◯
Work one on one with teachers to support their individual needs	◯	◯	◯	◯
Schedule regular meetings with teachers (every couple of weeks) to work on improving their skills over time	◯	◯	◯	◯
Allow teachers to direct our sessions based on their needs	◯	◯	◯	◯

3. I am confident in my abilities as a coach to... *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Model skills for teachers	◯	◯	◯	◯
Provide constructive, positive feedback to teachers	◯	◯	◯	◯
Guide reflective conversations with teachers	◯	◯	◯	◯
Collect and analyze feedback and data related to my effectiveness as a coach	◯	◯	◯	◯
Discuss overall feedback and data related to my coaching with administrators	◯	◯	◯	◯
Align my work as a coach to building and district goals	◯	◯	◯	◯

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4. I am confident in my abilities as a coach to... *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Prepare meaningful and engaging professional development	◯	◯	◯	◯
Lead and deliver meaningful and engaging professional development	◯	◯	◯	◯
Seek out my own professional learning opportunities	◯	◯	◯	◯

5. Overall, how confident do you feel in your ability as an instructional coach to support all educators that you are responsible for supporting? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not confident at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Extremely confident

6. How would you rate your overall job satisfaction as an instructional coach? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	N/A- This is my first year as a coach
Current satisfaction	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

7. Why did you participate in the Ohio Virtual Coach Network? *
Select all that apply.

Check all that apply.

☐ Find and share professional knowledge
☐ Overcome feelings of isolation
☐ Receive emotional support
☐ Seek out help with a current problem I am facing
☐ Connect with people beyond Lakota
Other: ☐ _____

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8. How did you engage with the Ohio Virtual Coach Network? *

Select all that apply.

Check all that apply.

☐ Absentee- I often forget about the network and do not typically engage much at all

☐ Observer- I mostly listen and read what others are saying or posting without engaging in discussion

☐ Responder- I will respond to questions that are posed and offer advice and experience

☐ Initiator- I will initiate conversation and pose questions of my own to the group

☐ Applier- I frequently apply ideas to my work that are shared or I come up with as a result of coach network discussions

9. Participating in the Ohio Virtual Coach Network... *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Significantly contributed to my learning as an instructional coach.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Significantly contributed to my confidence in my overall ability as an instructional coach.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭

10. Participating in the Ohio Virtual Coach Network... *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Connected directly to my coaching context	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Took place over time, or more than one sitting	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Provided active, hands-on, learning opportunities	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Included mentorship or coaching for me	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Connected me with other educators who serve in a similar role	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Provided opportunities for feedback and reflection	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Was on the job training	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭

11. Activities, discussions, and topics that were discussed in the Ohio Virtual Coach Network were... *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Connected to my professional goals	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Connected to my building and district goals	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Were directly applicable to my work	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Allowed for large and small group discussions	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Encouraged participation, regardless of experience	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
Allowed me to form meaningful relationships with other participants	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭

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12. The synchronous online meetings for the Ohio Virtual Coach Network... *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Positively contributed to my experience with OVCN	◯	◯	◯	◯
Made it easy to participate	◯	◯	◯	◯
Provided a safe, trusting environment that allowed me to be vulnerable	◯	◯	◯	◯

13. How frequently did you Post to the Slack Workspace for Ohio Virtual Coach Network? *

Mark only one oval.

◯ Never

◯ Daily

◯ Weekly

◯ Monthly

14. How frequently did you read others' posts in the Slack Workspace for Ohio Virtual Coach Network? *

Mark only one oval.

◯ Never

◯ Daily

◯ Weekly

◯ Monthly

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15. The Slack Workspace for the Ohio Virtual Coach Network... *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Positively contributed to my experience with OVCN	◯	◯	◯	◯
Made it easy to participate	◯	◯	◯	◯
Provided an opportunity for both synchronous and asynchronous opportunities to connect and share	◯	◯	◯	◯
Provided a safe, trusting environment that allowed me to be vulnerable	◯	◯	◯	◯

16. Do you plan to participate in Ohio Virtual Coach Network again? *

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Maybe

17. What have you found most helpful from participating in the Ohio Virtual Coach Network? *

18. What was missing from the Ohio Virtual Coach Network to better support your growth and development as an instructional coach? *

19. What recommendations do you have to improve the overall quality of Ohio Virtual Coach Network? This could include topics to discuss, the structure of the meetings, frequency of meetings, etc. *

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C: Non-Participant Survey

OVCN Non-Participants Survey

This confidential survey will inform Katie Ritter in her Ed.D. research at Vanderbilt University. This study will seek to understand the extent in which a professional network for instructional coaches provides high quality professional development to participants.

Survey results are completely confidential between the respondent, Katie, and Katie's faculty advisor at Vanderbilt University. Individual responses will not be shared with Lakota, nor will they be reported in the findings.

* Required

1. First and Last Name *

   _____

2. How many years will you have been employed at Lakota by the end of the current school year? *

   _____

3. How many years will you have been an instructional coach at the end of the current school year? *

   This should include both at Lakota and anywhere else you may have held the position.

   _____

4. Please select all of the reasons that led to your decision not to participate in the Ohio Virtual Coach Network this year. *

   Check all that apply.

   ☐ Too much of a time commitment
   ☐ Scheduling conflicts- I had overlapping appointments during the meetings
   ☐ I did not think it would be valuable
   ☐ I did not understand the expectations
   ☐ I already have a valuable professional network
   ☐ I wanted to participate, but the group had reached capacity
   Other: ☐ _____

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5. Do you currently have a Professional Learning Network (PLN) made up of other instructional coaches? *

    Mark only one oval.

    ◯ No

    ◯ Yes; it is primarily other Lakota coaches

    ◯ Yes; it includes primarily coaches outside of Lakota

    ◯ Yes; it includes both coaches from Lakota and outside of Lakota equally

6. Please list your current Professional Learning Networks (PLN)

    i.e. ISTE's Edtech Coaches PLN, Twitter, etc.

7. Do you plan to participate in the Ohio Virtual Coach Network next year, if possible? *

    Mark only one oval.

    ◯ Yes   *Skip to question 8*

    ◯ No   *Skip to question 10*

    ◯ Maybe   *Skip to question 12*

8. Why do you want to participate in the coach network next year? *

9. Is there any reason you would not participate in the coach network next year? *

10. Why don't you plan to participate in the coach network next year? *

11. What changes could be made to make it more likely for you to participate in the coach network next year? *

12. Why are you considering participating in the coach network next year? *

13. What would cause you NOT to participate in the coach network next year? *

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D: Qualitative Codes and Descriptions

Code	Description
Admin Support Negative	Anytime someone references negative admin support.
Admin Support Positive	Anytime someone references positive admin support.
Applicable Topics	Anytime addressing an immediate concern, problem, or being able to immediately apply the topic to their own work is mentioned.
Attendance	Attendance referenced
Break Fix	Anytime someone references coach being confused with break fix support.
Building Relationships	Anytime relationships is referenced as a coach skill/PD
Coach Networking	Anytime networking or conversations with other coaches are mentioned
Coach Strategies	Anytime reference to a coach specific strategy is mentioned.
Collaboration	Anytime collaboration with other coaches is referenced.
Community	Anytime a feeling of a real community is referenced.
Confidence in own knowledge	Anytime a reference is made to confidence in ones own knowledge- good or bad.
Contect/Teaching	References to content and or teaching strategies.
Different Contexts	Anytime working with others who had a different context, i.e. grade levels or content areas.
Different perspectives	The importance of having different perspectives and ideas.
Extended Connections	Anytime referencing extended connections beyond the original network or reason to gather with other coaches.
Facilitator Impact Positive	Anytime the facilitator has a positive impact.
Giving not Receiving	Anytime someone references giving to a PLN and not receiving ideas from others.
Group Members	Group members affect participation
Group Size	group size referenced
Informal Coach Learning	Anytime a coach references learning from what another coach does in their school/setting, i.e. observations, shadowing, discussions.
Internal Positive Feelings	Anytime the positive feelings one gains about themselves from a network.
Job-Embedded PD	any non inservice PD.
Lack of Vision	Anytime a lack of vision is referenced

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Leadership	Anytime a coach references leadership PD needs.
Member input	anytime member input included to guide direction of network
Network Space Negative	Anytime the space (i.e. F2F or Online) had a negative effect.
Network Space Positive	Anytime the space (i.e. F2F, Online meeting, etc.) mentioned in a positive way.
Observation/Shadowing	Anytime observing and/or shadowing another coach is mentioned
Outside of District	Anyone time anyone references networking with people outside of the district.
PD Learning	Anytime reference to learning about a PD to implement.
Read Articles	Anytime reading articles is referenced.
Reflection	anytime a coach references reflection on their practice.
Reluctant Teachers	Working with reluctant teachers referenced.
Role Clarification	Anytime someone references clarifying the role and expectations of a coach
SEL	Anytime SEL PD or supporting emotions is referenced.
Social Media for PD	Anytime social media is referenced for coach PD.
Tech PD	Anytime someone references PD around technology tools, or teaching themselves technology tools.
Timing	when timing of interactions is referenced (synchronous vs asynchronous and F2F vs online)
Unique Role of Coach	Anytime with a coach refers to having a unique situation, or the coach being a unique roll.
Validation	Anytime own work is validated by working with other coaches.
Who Coached	Anytime someone references who to coach.